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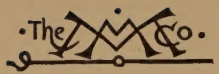

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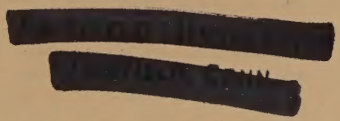
A PREFACE TO LITERATURE

R. R. GREENWOOD, M.A.
English Department, North High School
Worcester, Massachusetts



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FOREWORD

In presenting this brief survey of Literary Forms the writer has had in view several aims. It has been the purpose in general, however, to place in the hands of instructors and students a text of sufficient brevity to make it attractive on that score alone. Those who are engaged in the alluring and engrossing work of leading the novice into "the realms of gold" will doubtless agree that the acquisition, by the student, of such material as is here presented is attended by difficulties. The use of the reference library involves a process demanding more time than is commonly available on the part of the student. Again, the presentation of the material by dictation on the part of the instructor requires more time than may be properly utilized in the classroom period. The latter method is, therefore, pedagogically impracticable and unsound.

With the above in mind, it has been the intention to offer in convenient form a handbook of such size, scope, and cost as to make it a readily available text for use at each stage of the student's literary travels. It is hoped, in spite of the ideal of brevity which was always the foremost consideration in planning the work, that the inspirational side has not been neglected, and that both instructor and student will find much herein that is interesting as well as

informative. The use of this material in his own classes, when supplemented by brief explanation and discussion, has convinced the writer of the "workable" nature of such a text.

R. R. GREENWOOD

WORCESTER, MASSACHUSETTS
1930

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A PREFACE TO LITERATURE

A PREFACE TO LITERATURE

INTRODUCTION

One of the first things that we are likely to ask ourselves when we take up Literature as a study is the reason for such procedure. Doubtless we have all read stories or listened to them since we were little children, and many of us have time and again experienced the thrill that is afforded by a good story skillfully told. Since that is so, why bother to study something which we have already sufficiently enjoyed when followed as a simple pastime? There are many answers to this question, but perhaps two or three will suffice for our purpose here. In the first place, the study of Literature gives us a far deeper appreciation of the art of the writer than mere reading can possibly provide. In that way our acquaintance with his work affords us a more intense pleasure than would be possible otherwise. For proof of this, consider for a moment how much your appreciation of a game of football is enhanced by the fact that you understand many of the rules of the game and are able to judge intelligently what the players are trying to do. Doubtless without that knowledge you would be able to enjoy the performance to a limited extent, but the action on the field would lose the greater part of its meaning for you, and this

Why we study literature

is applicable in exactly the same way in the matter of your contact with a piece of literature.

Almost invariably when a young person finds a great book "dry," it means that he has not fully understood what he has read. The fault is frequently not his. He may not have been able to comprehend what the writer was attempting to do, and therefore failed in the matter of interpretation, or his own experience may have been too limited for a sympathetic understanding. Experience, as we have heard again and again, is a wonderful teacher. Probably mankind, since the beginning of time, has learned more from actual experience than from any other source. Fortunately or unfortunately, many of us are so situated that actual experience is utterly impossible for us in many of the fields of life. The written records of the experiences of others, either actual or imaginary, can afford us not only entertainment of a sort which may hold us spellbound with interest, but they can enlarge our understanding, deepen our perceptions, and enrich our lives to an almost unbelievable degree. In this manner the stay-at-home threads his way through jungle trails and scales the mountain peaks of a distant continent while sitting quietly by his fireside on a winter evening. So, too, he may soar into the realm of the imagination with the poets and behold a beauty far beyond his fairest dreams in ordinary life. He may pass years shipwrecked on a desert island. His heart may quicken to the thrill of a great tournament where knight belabors knight with mighty blows. He may plod with Silas Marner through the years of a slowly unfolding life, and grow as Silas grows through his love for a little child.

He may drop back three hundred years and join a throng of noisy, happy Londoners entranced with the wonder of one of Master Shakespeare's plays. There is no limit to what he may do or to the scope of the rare experiences that may be his. Time and space no longer shackle him, and the whole world, past and present, are his for the mere asking — and a little careful study and thought. He not only perceives men in action in distant lands and long-dead centuries, but he comes to understand how they felt and what they thought about life in an age far different from his own. With all this there comes to the reader a wider sympathy with human ideas and ideals of every age and clime, and a saner viewpoint on all things, great and small. Professor Phelps in his essay called "Happiness" emphasizes the idea that the happiest person is the person who thinks the most interesting thoughts. Undeniably there are few things more conducive to interesting thought than the study of worth-while books.

SECTION I

PROSE

In order to enter the great realm of Literature with its boundless opportunities for enjoyment and its unlimited sources of information, it is necessary that we should see clearly and judge with intelligence. Our successful interpretation of the things we read depends in a great measure on our knowledge of some of the attributes of the various forms of writing, and an acquaintance with some of the more important terms used in the technical study of literature. Words come to have special meanings when used in connection with special things. Imagine, for instance, how puzzling the terms used by an expert machinist, or a golf enthusiast, must be to one who knows nothing of either machinery or golf. So it is with the technical language of literature. It will pay us to gain an insight into these matters before we proceed further.

Difference between prose and poetry

Of course we are all aware that the two broad, inclusive types of writing are *prose* and *poetry*. Under these two classifications we may place practically every form of written expression. To attempt to separate these two forms is sometimes very difficult, for the boundary line between prose and poetry is frequently far from clearly defined. Perhaps the surest test lies in the difference of subject matter.

When the thought in a piece of literature is of such a lofty nature that the appreciative reader is carried far above the confines of ordinary thinking, we consider such a work as poetical, in a sense, even though the writer has employed neither meter nor rhythm in his work. Again when we find a beautifully handled example of what at a glance seems to be prose, but upon investigation proves to be distinctly rhythmical in the flow of its language, and especially fine in the nature of its thought, we may be very sure that what we are reading properly belongs in the field of poetry. Short examples of this type are sometimes called *prose-poems*.

As for *prose* itself, we find that it has a number of divisions. Writers express themselves in various ways, and a skillful writer invariably employs that medium or form which is best adapted to the train of thought, or impression, which he wishes to convey. Perhaps if we were to step for a moment into the field of painting this would be clearly illustrated. Suppose that a painter should depict a single butterfly, gigantic in proportions and filling the greater part of a canvas six feet square. It might be a perfect portrait of the butterfly, but all suggestion of the daintiness and grace and fragile beauty that we commonly associate with this flowerlike creature would be lost. A great artist, be he writer or painter, does not err in this matter.

Divisions of prose

The more important kinds of *prose* are the *novel*, the *tale*, the *short story*, the *essay*, the *biography*, and the *drama*. The first three, the *novel*, the *tale*, and the *short story* may be grouped as *fiction*, a type of narrative or story, which,

although giving the impression of truth, is the product of the author's imagination.

It is well here to consider briefly four methods employed in the art of writing. These should not be confused with the divisions of prose mentioned above. They have to do with the *manner* of the author's craftsmanship, and in a way they are like the different tones of voice which the actor uses to bring about a desired effect. They are *narration*, *description*, *exposition*, and *argument*.

Methods of expression in prose

Narration may be defined, simply, as the telling of a story.

Narration

Description is the method used in presentation of a word-picture to the reader's mind. There are two general types of description, sometimes known as the *artistic* and the *scientific*. *Artistic description* is used to produce a more or less accurate picture in which many of the unimportant details may be lacking while the more important features are stressed. *Scientific description* must be exact. It is not used to create a general impression, but rather to give complete information through an almost photographic word-picture. An architect's plans are, to the capable builder, a sort of scientific description of the house he is to construct; the word-picture with which the architect sketches the final appearance of the house as it seems to his mind's eye is more in the nature of artistic description.

Description

Exposition is explanatory writing. It tells us in general how to do a thing, and attempts to make clear to the reader some method or process.

Exposition

Argument is the method of writing used for the purpose of convincing the reader of the truth of a proposition through the presentation of certain evidence, or the consideration of facts that have a bearing on the case at hand. *Argument*

It may readily be seen that these methods are, in general, fashions of writing, and are, therefore, most frequently used as a means to an end in the larger literary forms.

When we come to consider any complete prose work as a whole, that is, a single novel, for instance, we find that there are four attributes, or elements, through the use of which an author is enabled to complete his aims. These elements are: *characterization*, *plot* or *action*, *atmosphere* or *local color*, and *dramatic force*. Any or all of these attributes are to be found in practically all prose writing which is done with a view to artistic effect, and to a degree they are employed in poetry also. They are of primary importance in our study of literature and must be given careful consideration. *Characterization* deals with the *people* in a story, and by its use the author molds the character and personality of each person whom he desires us to know intimately and to understand. Naturally those who play the more important parts in the unfolding of the story are most carefully characterized, while the minor figures are portrayed in a far more indefinite and sketchy manner. In this way certain personalities are emphasized while others are left more or less indistinct in outline. An able writer, like a skillful painter, understands the value of grouping the persons or objects in his work so that there is no confusion due to our failure to place each Literary attributes

in the proper perspective. If we study a great picture carefully, we realize that certain persons or objects are "placed in the limelight," and the effect desired by the artist is unmistakable. In literature we should never confuse *characterization* and *description*. Description is essentially a superficial matter, having to do with externals only. It gives us a picture in words and from it we may know exactly how the hero looks and what his outward appearance is; it does not tell us of his motives, his habits of thought, or his attitude toward people or ideas. Description never enables us to know a character in a book thoroughly; it is the province of characterization to bring this about. A great writer develops his characterization in such a fashion that we almost see into the very souls of those of whom he writes. When this is successfully done, it results in the author's giving to the world a character so perfectly delineated that the purely imaginary person in the book almost seems to step forth from the printed page and to become a breathing, living being, as real to us as are our friends, and quite as unforgettable. Literature has many examples of this. A great number of Shakespeare's men and women we know as though they were our intimate associates, and with them we run through the whole gamut of human emotions, experiencing their loves, their fears, their hatreds, and their joys. Hamlet's tragic problem becomes our own. The encroaching fears that inevitably strangle Macbeth's hopes of happiness are not outside the pale of our own understanding as he descends step by step into the pit of degradation dug for him by his insatiable ambition and his hunger

Characterization

for regal power. Many of the characters of Dickens and Thackeray will live as long as the English language is read, and Becky Sharp will continue her machinations for generations to come although her creator has long since ceased to enrich the literature of his land.

Many of the writers of our own day possess this ability to create characters who really live. In John Galsworthy's *The Forsyte Saga* we find people who are so endowed with human qualities, and so real, that we speak of them in exactly the manner in which we would speak of close friends, quite forgetting that they are only the children of a great writer's imagination, and that they never really lived.

This art of characterization is a very difficult one and a matter which we should carefully observe wherever it occurs.

A second attribute, and an essential of any story, is *plot*. It really is only the course of action which the story takes. In a way it is something like a track or highway extending from the beginning to the ending of the narrative, a route over which the reader must travel as the action progresses. Again, it is something like a chain, the several links of which give to the story its movement and its active interest. Without plot there would be no story, in fact nothing but the expression of a single picture or idea. Of course, an intricate plot is not a primary requisite, for many of our finest stories have but the simplest plot construction. Where this is so, the emphasis falls upon some other attribute and there is just enough plot to afford opportunity for the action to transpire.

Plot

Atmosphere, or *local color*, as it is sometimes called, has to do with the time and place in which the story is set. In a way it creates a background for the action and for the characters. If this element is properly handled, a perfect illusion is produced in the mind of the reader and, while rapt in his story, he is quite oblivious to his own environment, and, indeed, seems to live in the time and locality in which the story takes place. Whereas this attribute may not be strongly stressed in certain stories where other interests are emphasized, yet it is an invaluable factor in many narratives, and its omission creates an effect which obviously fails to feed the imagination of the reader. A story which calls for the use of atmosphere, and in which that quality is lacking, is like stew without savor, or a dessert that is tasteless and flat. A writer adds tremendously to the charm of his work by the skillful employment of this element, and often produces his atmospheric effect in a seemingly mysterious manner. Where the novice would fill his work with long descriptive passages to attain his end, the mature writer creates the desired impression through the more subtle art of suggestion. While reading we actually seem to see through the eyes of the characters; the very scents and sounds known to them are known to us as well. Many of the stories of Kipling are permeated with the atmosphere of India. So well has Kipling diffused this atmosphere through his work, that it has charmed readers the world over, and if his books were noteworthy for this quality alone, his fame would be world-wide in extent. Bret Harte gave us the spirit of the early days in the Great West partly through his skill in depict-

Atmosphere

ing atmosphere, or local color. There are writers of the jungle and writers of the sea who convey the sense of environment with marked effect, and as there is no corner of the world which has not furnished material for the pens of those engaged in making literature, so the element of atmosphere, which, skillfully used, brings close to our sensibilities the silence of the jungle and the illimitable mystery of the ocean, is of tremendous importance.

Dramatic force in a story is not easy to explain, but we may perhaps call it that power which makes us so keenly aware of the action that we seem to be witnessing the incidents and events as if they were going on actually before our eyes. If at a certain point of intense interest or excitement in a story the reader feels an unmistakable urge to gesticulate or repeat the words aloud, and if in his mind's eye the image of the action sweeps on with compelling attraction and distinctness, creating the illusion of perfect reality, he may be very sure that dramatic force is present to an emphatic degree. There are some tales which almost seem to dramatize themselves. Stevenson once wrote, "Some places speak distinctly. Certain dank gardens cry aloud for murder; certain old houses demand to be haunted; certain coasts are set apart for shipwreck." It may just as truly be said of certain stories that they cry aloud for dramatization; their thrills are so effectively presented that they seem only to await a proper division into acts and scenes to fall into the realm of drama itself.

Before we pass to a more detailed study of the various literary forms, there are two terms which merit our attention, and which are used with great frequency in the dis-

cussion of fiction. In talking of fiction, we classify most of it as either *romantic* in its method of presentation, or as *realistic*. *Romantic fiction* deals oftenest with events which are far out of the beaten track of the average reader's experience. The occurrences in the story are of such a nature that they tend to arouse the reader's interest to a pitch of excitement such as he seldom feels in real life. Oftentimes it leads us into circumstances where the very novelty of unexpected events is a distinct pleasure in itself. In company with the hero of the story we fight great battles, pass through hairbreadth escapes, suffer the terrors of shipwreck, and thrill to the mysteries which hold us entranced in the all-absorbing magic of the tale. Many of these tales illustrate most entertainingly the force of the old adage that "the course of true love never runs smooth." Books of this type we sometimes call "the literature of escape" because they take us far away from the grind of daily life and petty cares. In this way they serve as a recreation and have genuine value in that respect. Of course the objection may be raised that such stories are not worth while since they exaggerate to a great degree and are therefore not true to life. Such criticism is superficial on the whole. Stories of this type are often filled with exaggerations, to be sure, but we must remember that the exaggerations are for emphasis and contrast, that life may sometimes be stranger than fiction, and that by stressing certain human tendencies in his characters, and quite eliminating others, the author is enabled to focus the attention of the reader upon his artistic effects with great directness and precision. In this manner

Romantic fiction

the broader, more general, truths of life are brought to the front, and while a great abundance of life's experience may be packed into the adventures of the hero in an improbably short space of time, yet the basic truths underlying human motives and human life are present to a great degree.

An author idealizes many things in a story of this type, and although the details presented have not in themselves occurred, yet the impression created is, in general, one based on things that are fundamentally true. It is an unlimited field for the pen of the writer, for as long as human beings crave excitement, and thrill to bold deeds, the demand for these stories can never be exhausted. We seldom tire of them, and in their pages we lose ourselves in the delightful excitement of such breathless incidents as the storming of the castle in *Ivanhoe*, the chariot-race in *Ben Hur*, and the fight which Jim Hawkins wages in the ship's rigging in *Treasure Island*. In Poe's tales the element of mystery, or that of terror, holds us spellbound. In the brilliant treatment of the theme in Tarkington's *Monsieur Beaucaire* we spend a charmed hour. John Ridd and Lorna Doone, immortal lovers, take us with them through the trials and struggles of a lifetime of unchanging devotion. With Denis, in the short story "The Sire de Malétroit's Door," we drop by accident into the dwelling of a powerful family of medieval France and find ourselves engrossed with an evening's adventure which provides the plot for one of the most delightfully imaginative stories which Stevenson ever penned. In Kipling's "Soldiers Three" the escapades of three "Tommies" in the British army of India thrill and amuse us at the same time. Of

such citations there is no end. Year after year romantic fiction is being written and read in ever increasing volume.

In some ways *realistic fiction* is quite the opposite of romantic fiction. The realistic writer attempts to portray life exactly as it is. His characters talk and think in exactly the manner in which most of us talk and think. There is no exaggeration of portraiture here, and whereas the action and plot may not carry us into a realm delightfully different from our everyday lives, yet the realistic story has a great value as a record of life's actual experiences, and unquestionably we learn much from these almost photographic studies of the action and thought of the characters which we find in books of this type. Perhaps it is not too much to claim for such work as this when we say that a good book of this class really seems to provide us with a cross-sectional view of the urgent impulses and underlying motives which are the creative force beneath the actions and desires of the characters. Some of our finest literature has been written from the realistic point-of-view, and if we read such outstanding writers as George Eliot, Thackeray, Hardy, or the great French writer, Balzac, we come to perceive what searching, masterly studies of life they have given us through the channels of realistic fiction.

Realistic fiction

The above may serve to give us a working idea of some of the more general features essential to the study of literature, and prepare us for a rather more intensive study of the principal literary forms.

SECTION II

THE NOVEL

Practically all prose fiction is written with one of two purposes in view. It is written either to instruct, or to entertain. Of course it is entirely possible for a single work of fiction to function in both of these fields at one and the same time. A great ethical novel like *Silas Marner*, for instance, provides us with a narrative of deep and lasting interest, and at the same time forcefully presents a certain philosophy of life.

From about the middle of the eighteenth century one of the very important forms of prose literature has been the *novel*. The story of its origin and growth from the essays of Addison and Steele is an interesting matter in itself. It is also of interest to note here that our old friend, *Robinson Crusoe*, is one of the early landmarks in the evolution of this form. It is a story of adventure, emphasizing principally action and atmosphere. Although it is based on the real experience of a man who suffered shipwreck and lived for a long period in isolation, yet it is an example of romantic fiction, and is an alluring yarn in which generations of readers have found delight. From the day of its publication to the present, the never-ending stream of adventure novels has increased. These books, with many of our short stories, make up the great

Novel of adventure

body of our literature of escape — the stories told purely to entertain. Into this class fall such fascinating and long-loved stories as *Ivanhoe*, *Lorna Doone*, *The Last of the Mohicans*, *The Count of Monte Cristo*, *The Cloister and the Hearth*, and *Huckleberry Finn*. Among the more recent novels of this type are *To Have and to Hold*, *The White Company*, *The Sea Wolf*, *The Sea Hawk*, and *Beau Geste*.

Of course it must be understood that a novel may be classified in more than one way and that a single story may be considered as sometimes belonging in more than one group. Just as it is entirely possible for a man to be a physician, a yachtsman, and perhaps a Republican, so we may sometimes consider a novel of adventure as falling into the class of the "historical novel" as well. In such case it is a matter of the *setting*, or background of the story, more than anything else, which makes possible this dual classification. The setting itself is closely associated with the atmosphere or local color, and has to do with the *time* and *place* in which the story occurs. So in *Ivanhoe* we give the setting as medieval England; or in *Huckleberry Finn* as the Mississippi River Valley in the first half of the nineteenth century.

Historical novel

The *historical novel* mentioned above has its setting in some period of history, and the events of the narrative take their color from this circumstance. This type affords us some of our most thrilling and entertaining reading, and while our knowledge of the facts of history is, in some instances, not greatly increased by the perusal of these books, still we unquestionably gain a general view of the time in which the story is set, and this

is valuable in itself. The broad background presented by history, with its unlimited variety of incident and picturesque event, provides the writer with an abundance of material with which to work, and gives an opportunity, as well, for the spinning of many a fine, exciting yarn, brimming with lively action and rich in dramatic force as well. Into this group fall such stories as *A Tale of Two Cities*, with its background of the French Revolution; *Hereward the Wake*, with its adventures of a doughty fighter in the England of the eleventh century; many of the novels of Scott; and among the books written in our own day, the stories of Winston Churchill, William Stearns Davis, and those of Rafael Sabatini. In the early years of the nineteenth century Scott did much to develop and perfect this type of narrative. In this field he attained to such a degree of popularity and success that his books have long served as models for later writers, and he has sometimes been called "the father of the historical novel."

We oftentimes speak of a novel as an *ethical novel* because it deals with the trials, struggles, and growth of a character in relation to the standards of right and wrong. A book of this sort is most frequently serious in the tenor of its thought, and presents a careful analysis of human impulses and motives. Naturally it is not written for entertainment alone, but in addition gives us food for thought. Notwithstanding its serious quality, in the hands of a skillful artist the book is never a bore, for the writer clothes his theme in the garb of entertaining narrative and the instructive element is presented through suggestion rather than through a bald recital of the lessons

Ethical novel

intended to be conveyed. Books of this type have furnished us some of our finest studies in characterization. They are often rich in the quality of their atmosphere. If we find the action slow, the plot thin, and the dramatic force lacking in intensity, we should remember that the author's intention here was not to produce an exciting piece of fiction, but rather to lead us, in a thoughtful mood, into the life of a character, the solution of whose complex problems may enlarge our viewpoint and render us better fitted to cope with those problems which are our own. *Silas Marner* is an excellent example of the ethical novel, and so, too, are such books as *Romola*, *The Scarlet Letter*, *The Bent Twig*, *Joseph Vance*, and *A Certain Rich Man*. These books are often known also as *psychological novels* because they present a psychological study of the characters; that is, they show the growth and change experienced by the characters through their own acts, the deeds of others, the pressure of circumstance, or the transfiguring force of time.

Another type of serious novel is the *novel of propaganda or purpose*. In this variety of book the author is trying to bring forcibly to our attention a certain fact or group of facts which may definitely influence our views in a particular matter. Public opinion is sometimes molded in no slight degree by stories of this nature and while their permanence is threatened by the fact that the world comes to accept the truths or viewpoints which they present, thereby destroying their usefulness, yet some of them are so ably written that they endure as works of art indefinitely. A very widely known

Novel of propaganda or purpose

novel of this kind is *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Of course, as an argument against slavery, this book undoubtedly stirred thousands of hearts at the time of the Civil War. However, if Mrs. Stowe had not introduced the strong narrative element which made the work a readable story, doubtless with the freeing of the slaves, it would have passed rapidly into oblivion.

When H. G. Wells wrote *Mr. Britling Sees It Through* during the World War, he gave us a novel with a purpose. Undoubtedly thousands of worried and war-weary British citizens recognized Mr. Britling as the prototype of dozens of their acquaintances and friends in the upper-middle-class of British society. Mr. Britling was portrayed as a typical member of that class, a personality into which were woven the combined elements of strength and weakness common to the average human being of his time and environment. The theme of the story brought out the truth of the fact that humanity was sound at the core, that in spite of petty foibles, frailties, and a more or less innate tendency to blunder, it was capable, through the chastening effects of sacrifice, and the crushing loss of those near and dear, to win through to a stature approaching genuine greatness.

The Scarlet Letter falls into the novel of purpose class also, by stressing the evil effects of sin that is hidden and allowed to fester in the very soul of the perpetrator, causing endless suffering and grief. As has been hinted, the novel of propaganda is often short-lived as was the case with many of the stories written during the Great War for the sole purpose of exposing the savagery and ruthless ambition of

one or another of the combatants. A great number of these books are, a few years later, utterly forgotten, for the cause that brought them into being, a great war, is fading into the domain of history. *The Scarlet Letter*, on the contrary, is as vital a piece of work to-day as it was at the hour of its publication. This is due to the nature of its subject matter. *The Scarlet Letter* is not limited to the life or time of any particular man. In Arthur Dimmesdale and Hester Prynne we find two people who are characterized by Hawthorne with supreme art, and are typical of all human beings in nearly every age. The theme is not dependent upon any particular widespread trend of theories or events. It deals, rather, with the manifestations of human nature and the deeper life of the human soul. These matters are sometimes called "the eternal verities" and they do not change from generation to generation, but are truths which are essentially the same to-day as they were a thousand years ago.

When the novel of purpose deals with matters of this sort it falls also into the class of the ethical novel, and this is true of *The Scarlet Letter*, or *Romola*, or a great satirical work like *Vanity Fair*. It may be seen, therefore, that it is not the purpose element in a novel which may make it immortal, but rather the appeal of either its narrative charm, or the embodiment in the story of one or more of life's great and everlasting truths.

Summary

As a whole, then, novels may be grouped into several large classes: (1) *novels of adventure* in which we find enjoyment most often through the narrative element which is furnished generally by the plot, action,

and dramatic force — (2) *historical novels* which have for their background some period or trend of incident borrowed from history, and which come often under the class of the *novel of adventure*, as well. These stories usually emphasize atmosphere strongly, as well as plot and action and dramatic force — (3) *ethical novels* which deal with the life and growth of the characters of the story as worked upon by the forces of good and evil. These are frequently classified under the name of psychological novels, and the characterization is a powerful attribute here — (4) *novels of purpose* or *propaganda* which are written with the definite purpose in view of influencing human thought or changing the reader's viewpoint on some important matter. Books of this type, which deal with only a passing phase of human activity, are frequently short-lived; however, those which deal with unchanging truths are really *ethical novels* as well, and number among their ranks some of the world's greatest literature.

In general the *novel*, while not among the older literary forms, having its origin no earlier than the middle decades of the eighteenth century, has come to be considered one of the most important forms of all, and has served as a most useful medium of expression for many of our greatest masters of prose. Probably the number of novels read to-day far exceeds that of any other form of literature. Among the best writers of our own times the novel has proved to be a very fitting instrument, and such master-craftsmen as Hardy, Conrad, and Galsworthy have employed it repeatedly with marvelous success.

SECTION III

THE SHORT PROSE ROMANCE OR TALE

The *short prose romance*, or *tale*, as it is sometimes called, is of a rather indefinite nature, and may, perhaps, be best defined by a statement of what it is not. It varies from a novel in that it is much briefer and does not follow the methods common to novel construction. It differs from the short story in that it does not follow the rules of the real short story and is usually longer than that form of literary expression. Many critics classify the tale as a short story, but it will be seen later that such a classification is not an exact one. The *short prose romance* or *tale* is more frequently found in the writings of the medieval period than in the works of to-day. The narrative element is stressed usually, and the atmosphere is often an important factor. The plot is seldom very involved or complicated, and dramatic force is frequently entirely lacking. While the structure is loose even to the point of seeming carelessness on the part of the writer, producing a rambling effect to a certain degree, yet the result of this method is often a quiet story of distinct charm. Some of the early French and Italian romances were told or written in poetic form of a sort, and the quaint beauty of many of these, such as "Aucassin and Nicolette" or "Our Lady's Juggler," are so alluring that they are

The short prose romance

the delight of scholars to this day. Among the early English romances the King Arthur legends stand preëminent, a group of tales of such interest and romantic charm that they have never ceased to hold the hearts of men. Over a period of several centuries a number of great writers have turned to them as sources of inspiration and for artistic material for their own use. From Geoffrey of Monmouth, who wrote of King Arthur in 1152, to our own poet, Edwin Arlington Robinson, who has used these romances for the themes of some of his splendid poetical dramas, poets and romancers have employed these old tales, creating works of lasting beauty. However, as has been suggested, these fascinating tales belong more often within the province of poetry than that of prose, and there is really little connection, if any, between these early examples and the short prose romance of to-day. In length and looseness of structure they are a bit similar, but in subject matter there is little likeness to be found.

In general it may be said that the *short prose romance* of our time falls part way between the novel and the real short story. Such a story as "Rip Van Winkle," for instance, although classified frequently as a short story, is really, from the leisurely nature of its action, as well as from its length, more in the nature of a tale or short prose romance. James Lane Allen's "A Kentucky Cardinal" might well fit into this class also, as in fact might Stevenson's "Will o' the Mill," and the beautiful little German classic, "Immensee."

Summary

SECTION IV

THE SHORT STORY

One of the most recent forms of prose fiction to be developed, and an exceedingly interesting one as well, is the *short story*. It is American in its origin, although the French have employed it to splendid advantage, and two of our very finest writers, Poe and Hawthorne, are usually credited with having first made use of it extensively. Although thousands of short stories of varying degrees of excellence are written every year, it is an extremely difficult art when correctly handled, and the rules observed by the more fastidious writers are very exacting. The fact that a story is abbreviated is not enough in itself to make it a good short story. Other qualifications are necessary. One of the important requisites is that of directness. A technically perfect short story is the history of a single incident, or the expression of a single mood. *Unity* becomes the keynote of this type of story, and from the opening sentence the author strives to produce one effect and one effect only. As may be readily seen, there will be great economy of purpose in the structure of a short story and the writer will exercise extreme care in the arrangement of his material. Any feature which has a tendency to lead the interest from the principal effect toward any minor objective must be rigorously excluded.

Origin and requisites

From the very beginning the aim is to drive rapidly toward a single idea, a special crisis, or the creation of a single effect. Some of the French writers have gone so far in this respect as to insist upon the observance of unity of time, place, and action. By this they mean that nothing should break the sense of continuity in the time and action, and that the events should occur in one definite setting or locality. The freedom of construction common to the novel, or the short prose romance, is impossible here, and, speaking in terms of photography, the novel is not unlike a moving picture, while the short story more closely resembles a snapshot. Of course great numbers of excellent short stories are written which follow some of the specifications mentioned above only partially. In general the American and English writers have not hewn so closely to the line as have the French, and in using rather more freedom of structure they are enabled to produce stories with greater variety of charm.

Attributes

The four elements made use of in other forms of prose fiction, that is, *characterization*, *plot*, *atmosphere*, and *dramatic force* are all made use of in writing the short story, and they occur in variable ways. A single example of this form may include any or all of these four attributes, but in the majority of those stories written by our present-day writers probably plot receives the most frequent emphasis.

Types

There are a number of types of this form of story and a short story is sometimes classified according to those qualities or attributes which appear to govern the effect produced. In this way we often group

them as short stories of *humor*, of *terror*, of *mystery*, of *surprise*, of *characterization*, of *plot*, and of *atmosphere*. Among the stories of *humor* we find occasionally a charming bit of whimsicality of the sort attained by Barrie, or an amusing absurdity of situation like that in which Thomas Bailey Aldrich places his hero in "Goliath." In "Zenobia's Infidelity," by Henry Cuyler Bunner, the title itself, as well as the narrative, is fancifully funny as soon as we learn that Zenobia is an elephant! Some of the lighter stories of O. Henry enliven us not only by their picturesque diction, but also by the droll quality of the incidents pictured. Sometimes the entire piece gives rise to a whimsical situation in which the reader is delightfully puzzled as is the case in Frank R. Stockton's "The Lady, or the Tiger?" We feel that the author has become the perpetrator of a hoax, and is slyly laughing at us from behind the printed page. Ellis Parker Butler's "Pigs is Pigs" has furnished laughter for thousands of readers. In some instances the humor has its origin in the ludicrous portraiture of the characters, as well as in the mirth-provoking nature of the episodes. Who has not chuckled as the imagination limned the caricature of Ichabod Crane?

Short stories of *terror* have been effectively handled by a number of writers, but perhaps no one has done this more skillfully than Poe. Not only was he a master of the technical method of the short story, but he seemed to possess a distinct flair for the capture of thrills born of terror, and a unique ability in presenting the gruesome and the horrible. In such of his ventures as "The Pit and the Pendulum," "The Cask of Amontillado," "The Masque of the Red

Death," and "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," we find a stark, terrifying atmosphere of horror such as has, perhaps, never been surpassed by other writers and only occasionally equaled.

The French short story writer, Guy de Maupassant, was very successful when writing in this vein, and Ambrose Bierce in some of his cleverly executed and extremely imaginative stories in the collections called "In the Midst of Life," and "Can Such Things Be?" has given us stories that hold us breathless with wonder and terror. So, also, Katherine Fullerton Gerould in the story from which her collection, "Vain Oblations," takes its name, has written a powerful narrative in which the horror, while suggested only, and presented indirectly, lurks always upon the fringe of the reader's imagination, and chills him like a spectral shape. At the conclusion we are all but stunned by the ghastly suggestion of a living death of such a repugnant nature that it almost paralyzes thought and exceeds the scope of words.

Irvin Cobb's grim tale, "The Belled Buzzard," in which a respected citizen who has committed murder finally betrays himself through sheer fright, is a good example of this class, and another story, by Henry James, called "The Turn of the Screw," is among the best, although it is, perhaps, not one which a person with nerves of a sensitive sort would care to read late at night in the silence of an empty house.

In the short story of terror the element of atmosphere is very important, while characterization may be of such minor value that the hero of the story becomes a mere lay-

figure whose function is solely that of affording an object for the grip of terror to prey upon. Even the plot is often meager and is of just enough importance to bind the episodes together. Through the skillful use of atmosphere the author works the reader into a frame of mind where the approach of events charged with horror seems inevitable, and from that moment the thrills come with ever-increasing tension until the climax is reached. Considered from the viewpoint of the literature of escape, the short story of terror is an exceedingly effective type.

Short stories of *mystery* sometimes fall into the same class with those of terror, but quite as frequently, while they are intensely interesting, the nightmare quality is missing. A good short story of mystery makes strong use of the plot element, and it can readily be seen, therefore, that this class will include practically all detective stories. Characterization is often employed although it is not necessarily stressed, but atmosphere is frequently a very valuable asset. In a well-handled story of this sort the reader's interest must never be allowed to lapse — a few dull paragraphs, and the whole narrative falls flat. It is interesting to note that often the solution of the mystery, or the unraveling of the problem, seems to follow a process whereby it travels backward. To be more explicit, the story opens after some disaster or unexplained event has occurred. The recital itself then traces the matter back to its origin or cause. When this method is used we speak of the result as a story of *ratiocination*. Most detective stories are arranged in this fashion, and if we observe the method used by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle in "The Adventures of

Sherlock Holmes," we find that this is invariably the process. Poe makes use of the same scheme in "The Purloined Letter" and in "The Gold Bug." When well-told, the stories of this class are particularly interesting since, in following the steps of the disentangling process, we experience something of the mental exhilaration which always comes with the effort of solving a puzzle or comprehending a problem.

The short story of *surprise* is so named from the fact that the conclusion, or *dénouement*, as it is called, is a result that is entirely unexpected. Of course it is quite possible for short stories of any type to be included in this group, providing the ending comes as a complete surprise, but in general these stories have certain distinct qualifications. The *plot* is of great importance here and the reader usually feels, when he has finished, that the writer has built his plot with the surprise element foremost in his mind from the very start. These stories are frequently spoken of as "stories which end with the turn of the screw" or with "the snap of the whip." The conclusion comes with an abruptness which gives almost the impact of a blow. The plot-interest climbs rapidly to the climax, and the succeeding action, or anticlimax, often embodied in a single sentence, comes with a suddenness which produces in the reader's mind the breathless sensation of a fall. This is perfectly worked out in Guy de Maupassant's famous story called "The Necklace." Here our interest is attracted by the almost impossible struggle of the two main characters, man and wife, to pay off a debt contracted through the loss of a borrowed diamond necklace. In

order to return to the owner a necklace identical with the one missing, the two unfortunate young people mortgage the best years of their lives. After a long period, made bitter by the most rigid economy which permits no thought of pleasure, the debt is paid and the disheartening struggle ends. However, the mischief is done; the couple, no longer young, are in no position to enjoy the years to follow. The owner of the necklace has never known of the substitution. Finally lender and borrower meet accidentally, and the unfortunate little woman tells her wealthy friend the story of the years of sacrifice. The end comes with an abrupt impact like the slamming of a door when the lender of the jewels says, "Oh! my poor Matilda! Mine were false. They were not worth over five hundred francs!"

An exceedingly fine and very condensed example of this type is Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's "How It Happened." With consummate skill, and without a sentence which digresses from the theme at hand, he presents a situation of intense interest, and literally hurls us out of this world and into the mystery of the world to come. To mention another splendid example, Ambrose Bierce, in "The Affair at Owl-Creek Bridge," spins a story of such imaginative power that the reader is utterly misled in the nature of the conclusion until the final sentence flashes its significance upon his amazed perception. These stories, like those of terror and mystery, belong to the literature of escape and sometimes furnish us with a vastly entertaining half-hour.

Sometimes some one of the literary elements which we have previously mentioned as attributes so colors or controls the substance of a story that the story is classified

according to that attribute. Thus we speak of stories of characterization, or stories of plot, or of those of atmosphere. Hawthorne's consistently handled character-drawing in "The Gentle Boy," which, by the way, falls almost into the class of the prose tale on account of its length and slender plot, makes this story one of characterization. Kipling's "Wee Willie Winkie," in spite of its fine plot and vigorous dramatic force, is really a splendid example of the same type. The author has caught, and suggested to the reader, the child's viewpoint with tremendous cleverness and with a deftness of comprehension that is, indeed, rare. There are few children in all the field of fiction whom we love and admire as we do "Winkie." It is a superb example of Kipling's power in the art of characterization.

Alice Brown, a New England writer, gives us a delightful short story of characterization in "Heman's Ma." Here every one of the characters common to her pen is wonderfully well-drawn. The conflict between *Heman* and his *Ma* is a spirited battle of personalities, and so perfectly is the characterization handled that the country-folk delineated appear to walk right out of the story and into intimate association with the reader.

Another admirable example of this art occurs in the portrait of John Bladburn in the story by Thomas Bailey Aldrich called "Quite So." While not adhering closely to the tenets of this form, the work presents an exceptional piece of portraiture, an atmospheric quality suggested with great charm, and a literary style that is delightful.

The short story of *plot* is extremely inclusive, since many of the stories of mystery, surprise, and terror fall naturally

into this class as well. The strong plot element in every good detective story, and in every good mystery story also, makes such examples as these really stories of plot. The plot, itself, is, of course, only the scheme or plan which the action follows. Even so, it is of paramount importance, for without it there would be no logical trend of events or course of thought. Without at least a modicum of plot there could be no story. It is only those stories where the plot is emphasized strongly and worked out with painstaking care, which we place, technically, in this group. Many of O. Henry's most engaging stories are of this type. Several of the finest examples of Kipling's work are stories of plot. Some of Stevenson's finest bits of fiction, while laden with a remarkable atmospheric quality, are perhaps best designated as stories of this class. If you will read "The Gift of the Magi," for instance, by O. Henry, or "The Purloined Letter," by Poe, you will see exactly what a short story of plot may be when done in a masterly way.

Short stories of *atmosphere* are, to a great degree, dependent for their interest either on a certain appeal having its origin in the setting, or on a certain suggested mood, or effect, with which the author moves the sensibility of the reader. When the atmosphere in a story is artistically handled, it is a very subtle matter, indeed, seeming to permeate the whole work, and yet at no definite point is it forced upon our attention by obvious descriptive passages or by long-drawn explanations. Perhaps we can make this matter clear by saying that it is something as intangible and ethereal as the mist that lies above the meadows on midsummer mornings, or like those distinctive yet subtle

odors and scents which, interpreted by the senses, produce certain ideas and effects within the mind without our realizing how or when they came. If the atmosphere in a story is stressed by a writer of ability, our imagination carries us unwittingly into the very environment or regional background which the author desired. So in stories of the sea we seem, indeed, to smell and taste the salt tang of the ocean. The sound of moving waters and the whistling of the winds is in our ears, and if we close our eyes, the vast expanse of sea and sky is all about. In some of Kipling's tales of India we feel about us all the seething life of that unfamiliar corner of the world with its curious sights, its strange customs, and the mystery of its age-worn rites.

Sometimes the atmosphere is not so much a matter of geography as it is a matter of mood, and in a story like "Ligeia" by Poe, the incidents related take place in no particular locality or century. We find ourselves in a shadow-haunted chamber, in the presence of somber beauty and of death, and the story fairly hypnotizes with its atmosphere of eerie expectancy and a suggestion of mystery that at once chills and charms. The plot of a story of this sort is not always of great importance, the dramatic force may be utterly lacking, while characterization is, often, quite unnecessary. On the other hand this does not mean that these elements are forbidden attributes, for in some instances they are very important, indeed. This only means that the short story of this class may hold the reader's attention through the lure of its atmosphere alone.

To conclude, then, the *short story* is a form of fiction emphasizing brevity and unity of effect. Like other forms

of fiction, it makes use of *characterization*, *plot*, *atmosphere*, and *dramatic force*. As a whole, short stories are commonly classified according to the subject matter, or treatment, into the following groups: short stories of *humor*, of *terror*, of *mystery*, of *surprise*, of *characterization*, of *plot*, and of *atmosphere*. This form is an American contribution to the art of fiction, and while used extensively by European writers, owes its origin, in the main, to Poe and Hawthorne.

Summary

SECTION V

THE ESSAY

With the study of the *essay* we come upon one of the older forms of prose literature, since it takes us back to the last quarter of the sixteenth century for its origin, when a French writer by the name of Montaigne published some volumes of his reflections upon various things and called them *Essais*. During the next decade or two, Sir Francis Bacon produced a similar type of work in England. Even such early compositions as those of Montaigne embodied the varied range of subject matter which was to be typical of the essay, and showed the personal flavor and reflective quality which have always been identified as essential attributes of this form even to this day.

Definition

The essay is not an easy matter to define for it allows great variety in its method of treatment, and is not so closely bound by rules as are the novel and the short story. Youthful readers who have not studied literary forms are often at a loss to distinguish between the essay and the short story, for the essay is frequently very brief. However, observation of some of the technical differences should make the matter clear. For instance, the essay is almost always reflective. It is not concerned with the telling of a story. To be sure, an anecdote or two may be related but in such a case the anecdotal

matter is always merely incidental, or told for purposes of illustration, and is invariably secondary to the purpose of the whole. Very commonly in writing an essay the author seems to allow us to pass without restriction directly into the storehouse of his mind with its accumulated hoard of opinions, viewpoints, fancies, and reflections. In no other form of literature, save possibly the autobiography, do we come quite so intimately into contact with the mental life and experience of the writer himself. Since this is so, it may readily be seen that if the essay charms and delights us as readers, it is because the essayist possesses a charming and delightful mind, rich in material into which we are glad to delve.

We sometimes speak of writing of this sort, where the material is drawn from purely internal sources, as *subjective writing*, in contradistinction to *objective writing* where all the material is obtained from purely external sources. Another term, which is sometimes used to distinguish the method where the author looks within his own mind for his subject matter, is *introspective writing*.

Subjective or introspective writing

We can readily see that in work of this kind no real plot is necessary; action, save where an anecdote is introduced, may be entirely lacking, and the narrative element or story-telling feature, is quite foreign to its needs. It does, however, sometimes employ characterization, while atmosphere may be exceedingly important.

As has been hinted, there is in this form the possibility of almost unlimited freedom on the part of the writer. He may give us his opinions on a tremendous range of subjects.

He may color his rambles with whimsical humor, and may clothe his reflections with a beauty of style which lures and holds the reader for that quality alone. He may chat with us informally, presenting his views or reactions in the realm of literature, of art, of science, or philosophy, or, in fact, in any field which has been touched by human experience and life. There is no requirement that he shall handle the subject with finality. The choice of points touched upon lies entirely with him, and the importance of the subject in itself is a minor matter. He may view anything for his subject matter from cabbages to kings, and if he is master of what we sometimes call "the essay touch," success will crown the result. Of course some of the masterpieces of this form are works of tremendous dignity and power, and widely inclusive in their scope; but there is no decree that a good essay must be written in any particular manner — it all lies within the privilege of the author to decide. The distinct personal note found in so many charming essays may be totally lacking in others, and yet these others may rank among the finest examples of literary art.

From whatever angle we may consider the essay, we find that in one aspect it seldom varies. It is always a type of work which leads the reader into intimate contact with the author's viewpoint, his mood, or his channels of thought. If, therefore, we bear in mind the frequently stated fact that the work of a fine essayist presents a reflection of the thought and interests prevalent in the age in which he lived, we at once realize the value of this form, not only as a type of literature rich in qualities that entertain and charm, but also as a form distinctly helpful in enlarging our own under-

standing of the growth of human thought and of men's interests and ideals.

Many of our most brilliant writers, old and new, have employed the essay with great success. Among the famous examples of this form we find some of Addison's finest work. In the early years of the nineteenth century Charles Lamb wrote essays of such charm and fanciful humor that his work has become a model for countless later writers, and has a place in the hearts of thousands of readers the world over. As a master of the conversational essay with its familiar, personal touch, he has never been surpassed. In his literary rambles no subject seems too trivial for his pen, and whether he writes of the manners of his day, of tea-table gossip, of men, or books, or of his own tastes or prejudices, it matters little — he invests them all with the indefinable charm of his own delightful mind. One of his choicest bits of whimsicality is his "Dissertation on Roast Pig."

Essayists

De Quincey, living at about the same time, owes his place in English letters to his skill as an essayist, and perhaps to that alone. A quiet, scholarly thinker, with a nature full of charm and gentleness, he succeeded in mastering a style of such purity, and expressing his subtle thought with such fine imagery and music that a passage from his work often has the beauty of a real poem.

From the time of Lamb and De Quincey to the present day the essay has never waned in the popularity of its appeal among cultured readers. Macaulay's vogue really began with his essay on Milton. Carlyle, with his tremendous earnestness and his forceful originality, his rugged style

and power, has given us a study, perhaps unequaled, in his "Essay on Burns" with its splendid analysis of the personality of a great poet. Ruskin, with his love of art and his passion for social reform, wrote essays that noticeably influenced the thought of his day. His style, rich in poetic imagery, beautifully clothes his fine revelations of nature and of art. Stevenson's work in this form is wonderfully alluring, and whether he entertains us with his captivating chatter on "Gas Lamps," "Crabbed Age and Youth," or "Falling in Love," as is the case in "Virginibus Puerisque"; or whether he provides food for stimulating thought, as is the case in "Aes Triplex," there is ever a graceful charm that permeates his work and enchants the reader.

Among the essay-writers of the present day, G. K. Chesterton writes with dexterity and with a touch that fascinates. Samuel McChord Crothers engages our interest in a refreshing manner, and Agnes Repplier's clearly-etched reactions prevail upon us by their incisive challenge. A great number of the younger writers are handling the essay with skill and charm, and each year brings to our attention the names of new essayists whose work wins our admiration.

Summary

On the whole, then, the *essay* is a type of prose writing which presents very intimately the thought of the writer. It is not written for the purpose of telling a story. On the contrary, it may reflect the opinions, viewpoints, tastes, interests, or feelings of the author, or it may present a serious study of almost any phase of human interest. The element of completeness is not a requirement; the essayist makes use of only those items and details which are of interest to him. The matter of plot is hardly

considered, and action and dramatic force are therefore lacking. Characterization may or may not be used as the essayist desires, but atmosphere is very often an important asset. Many of the best of our essays owe their appeal to the fact that they reflect clearly the personality of the writer and the distinctive charm of a delightful mind.

SECTION VI

BIOGRAPHICAL WRITING

A great writer once made the statement that the proper study of mankind was man. If this is true, then the study of biography should seriously interest us all, for *biography* is the type of writing that tells the story of some person's life, and *autobiography* is the story of a person's life as told by that person himself. The great books of this class have contributed literature of tremendous value both for study and for enjoyment. Many of them make extremely interesting reading and provide us with a wealth of information and real inspiration. They are valuable for their pictures of personalities, their delineation of manners and customs, and the fund of historical material which they provide. As studies of human nature many of them are priceless, and some of them have stood the test of time so successfully that they are ranked among the world's masterpieces.

Biography and autobiography

It sometimes happens that a diary, if its subject matter is sufficiently inclusive, may quite properly be considered as autobiography, and Samuel Pepys, living in London in the fascinating Age of Queen Anne and the Restoration period which preceded it, has left us a diary which for its utter candidness concerning the author himself, and its wealth of material drawn from the era in which he dwelt,

has proved a genuine treasure-house for the writers and historians of succeeding generations.

During the eighteenth century a friend of the great Dr. Johnson tagged the famous man about, watching him as a detective watches a suspect, but with a very different purpose in view. The friend was James Boswell, and his biography, *The Life of Johnson*, is one of the most successful examples of this form of writing which has ever been published. It is not merely a portrait; it is a work, instinct with life, and in it the awkward, uncouth scholar seems to live again and move among us with the matchless intellect, the kindly heart, and the supreme conversational charm that was his.

Among our own early writers Washington Irving was preëminent, and in his *Oliver Goldsmith* he has given us the life-story of one of the drollest personalities in all English literature, and with his fund of anecdote and incident has made us love the improvident poet as we love a friend.

Many splendid biographies and autobiographies have been written in our own day, and there seems to be an abundance of worth-while reading in this field offered us constantly. In the last few years Gamaliel Bradford has achieved great success in biographical writing. His book, *The Soul of Samuel Pepys* is especially fine. G. K. Chesterton has published a valuable study of Dickens. André Maurois paints a great poet in his *Ariel, a Life of Shelley*, and, with equal skill, turns to the colorful character of Disraeli and there achieves distinction. Such a work as Lytton Strachey's *Queen Victoria* seems quite too fine to fall into oblivion in the future, and Emil Ludwig, in spite of

the ponderous size and serious manner of many of his books, gives us able studies of the lives of such world-figures as Napoleon and Bismarck.

The story of an immigrant's first years in America is most entertainingly provided by Mary Antin's *The Promised Land*. G. Stanley Hall in his *Life and Confessions of a Psychologist* presents his own life experience in an excellent posthumous work.

The list of those who have written notable autobiographies during the last few decades is long, indeed, and includes the names of such interesting men and women as W. H. Hudson, James Huneker, Edward Bok, Helen Keller, George Arliss, and Brander Matthews, not to mention a host of others.

From a technical viewpoint biographical writing is very broad in its scope. While truth is a primary requisite, a biography, nevertheless, often contains a strong narrative quality, making it read quite like a story. Characterization is, of course, a very necessary attribute, while atmosphere, and even dramatic force, are frequently used with telling effect. A charming literary style is always a powerful asset and renders the success of the work more certain. There should be a distinct human appeal, for the reader of a biography wishes to understand the personality of the character whose life-story is the subject of the book, and to feel that this person is a genuine, living being whose problems and reactions make their impress upon conditions and companions which surround him.

If the writer fails to interpret his subject well, the portraiture is blurred and we miss the clear outlines which are

invaluable in this art. The effect is that of a photograph out of focus. The best biographical studies bring us into very intimate contact and sympathy with the subject and present his life-history from divers angles, throwing light upon each influence, achievement, and relationship which bears upon the development of his character and personality or enriches the sum total of his life-experience.

SECTION VII

BOOKS OF TRAVEL

Whereas *books of travel* cannot be said to constitute a distinct form in themselves, yet this field of writing is so rapidly growing in popularity that it seems fitting for us to consider books of this nature in a class by themselves. Undoubtedly the reason for their popularity lies in the fact that they fill a distinct need. Men have ever been rovers, and the quietest stay-at-home of us all "travels the world around" in his dreams. There is a decidedly potent lure in the call of far-away places — in the novelty and color of an environment and life unlike our own. In addition to this there is in these works opportunity for unlimited variety of treatment and freedom of viewpoint. The writer makes use, as he does in biography, of one, or all, of the literary attributes which we have previously considered, save possibly that of plot. Oftentimes a work of this sort bears a similarity to biography colored with the spirit of exploration and adventure, as is the case in *With Lawrence in Arabia* by Lowell Thomas, or *The Purple Land* by W. H. Hudson. Sometimes the tone is noticeably scientific as in the works of William Beebe like *Jungle Peace*, or *Galapagos: World's End*. Again, the imaginative quality may charm us into utter forgetfulness of all things belonging to the

Their appeal

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daily routine of our lives, and we may live with Herman Melville in the enchanting beauty of a South Sea island, spellbound with the fascination of the strange life of a primitive tribe as pictured in *Typee*. Thousands of young people have been entertained by experiences in Labrador as recounted by Dr. Grenfell, or by the quaint old customs of the Chinese as pictured by Welthy Honsinger in *Beyond the Moon Gate*. Theodore Roosevelt in his *African Game Trails*, and *Through the Brazilian Wilderness* affords us entertainment of the finest sort. Sir Hugh Clifford, who knows the southeastern corner of Asia as few white men have ever known it, takes us, in his book called *The Further Side of Silence*, into the very heart of the Malayan Peninsula and charms and thrills us at once with the novelty of a type of life which few of us can ever know. When Richard Halliburton told us the story of his rollicking adventures on a trip around the world, in his book *The Royal Road to Romance*, we found ourselves in the hands of a young magician who spirited us away into regions of rare beauty, held us enchanted as we viewed the ruins of ancient civilizations, filled us sometimes for an instant with terror, and fetched us back to our own firesides in time for tea.

Range of subject

Well-written books of travel are often as entertaining as novels, and are frequently as charming as the most fastidious reader could wish. In addition to this they may be exceedingly instructive. As has been stated, practically all of the literary elements are brought into play here, but one of the most essential requisites is the ability on the part of the writer to create the actual illusion of an imaginary

new environment, in the mind of the reader. In order to do this he must be able to employ the art of description with freshness and vigor, and to handle the attribute of atmosphere in a masterly manner. Humor is a distinct asset, and skill in the matter of narration is exceedingly valuable; while a literary style which in itself presents a strong appeal can hardly be overestimated.

SECTION VIII

DRAMA

The *drama* is one of the oldest and most important literary forms which we know. It is that form of literary art which presents a story through *action*. Over two thousand years ago the Greeks were writing dramas and giving plays, and the works of their greatest dramatists, Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, afford inspiration and interesting matter for study to this day. The dramatic impulse in human beings goes back many thousands of years before the Greeks, however, and is probably almost as old as the human race. This does not mean that our early ancestors presented well-planned, formal plays; it only means that the impulse to express feelings and thoughts through action is instinctive in all human beings, and our most barbarous races to-day, in their tribal dances and ceremonials, are giving expression to their emotions and ideas in a sort of primitive drama.

Definition

Not only is the drama a very ancient form of art, but it is a most difficult one as well, for the writer of drama is restricted in many ways. The fact in itself that action is the very essence of this form makes necessary a most rigid economy of words. Long explanations, when put into the mouths of the characters, render the play dull, and try the patience of an audience. A writer

Restrictions and limitations

must construct his play with the limitations of the theater constantly in mind. Oftentimes he must consider a particular producer who is to stage the play and present it to the public. Again it is sometimes necessary for an author to mold one of his characters to fit the peculiar characteristics or traits of a particular actor. Probably in no other form of literary art must so much that is vital to the interpretation of the story be left to the imagination. The finest examples of the drama often present relatively few facts, although so much is suggested that an intelligent spectator never loses the thread of the narrative and the effect created by the playwright is impressive and complete. Much that is necessary to our understanding of a particular play is suggested by the actors through their gestures and vocal inflections alone, and this very fact brings the drama exceedingly close to life. In our daily experiences we are seldom told outright what to expect of the people with whom we come into contact; on the contrary, we learn to read their motives and their characters through their expressions and their actions. It is the novelist's privilege to turn aside from the theme of the story and tell us many things about the people of whom he writes. The dramatist is allowed no such freedom. He must, with the help of the actor, only suggest these things in the briefest fashion, leaving the fuller interpretation to the imagination of the spectator. It will be readily seen from this how difficult is the art of the dramatist, and how clearly and unmistakably he must intimate those matters which he desires his audience to comprehend. The spectator, on the other hand, must meet author and actor half way,

and grasp rapidly the intention and meaning of the conversation and action presented, otherwise the whole matter becomes incomprehensible and the success of the play is wholly jeopardized.

The late Dr. Eastman, author of *An Indian Boyhood*, a book which has entertained so many thousands of our boys and girls, once told of witnessing a performance of *Hamlet* in company with a group of Indian chieftains who were on a mission to our national capital. The visitors were tremendously impressed with the great tragedy and watched breathlessly during the entire action. Later in the evening, in the seclusion of their hotel suite, they presented their impressions to Dr. Eastman, interpreting whole scenes in their own tongue. Of course the language of the master-dramatist was quite beyond their understanding, and therefore, in spite of their intense interest, and their keen appreciation, racial in its origin, of all things dramatic, the entire point of the play was lost and an interpretation never dreamed of by Shakespeare was the result.

Kinds of drama

Just as the novel and the short story were classified according to the content, or according to the literary method employed, so the various types of drama are classified according to the effect which the author desires to produce. In general there are two inclusive classes of the drama: the *tragedy* and the *comedy*, and these two types differ essentially. For purposes of making their differences clear it is well to observe here that in every play there exists a *conflict* of a sort — that generally two opposing influences contend with, and resist, each other. Out of this friction evolves the action and plot-interest of

the play. The leading character, known technically as the *protagonist*, is confronted with, and beset by, obstacles. If one of the characters in the drama acts as the opposing force, or personifies the ideas which present the obstacles, that character is known as the *antagonist*.

In a tragedy the protagonist is overcome by the obstacles; in a comedy the obstacles are overcome by the protagonist. With this consideration in view it is easy for us to perceive why such works as *Macbeth*, *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, or Ibsen's *Rosmersholm*, are called tragedies. In every instance the leading character, or the protagonist, is crushed by forces too powerful for his control. On the other hand, in such plays as *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *As You Like It*, or Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer*, all obstacles are surmounted by the leading character or characters, and the play ends happily for all who are involved.

Tragedy and comedy

Sometimes, however, the distinction between tragedy and comedy is not so clearly drawn, and at the conclusion of the play we find ourselves wavering between two points of view. Looked at from one angle the play seems to be a tragedy; from another, a comedy. In other words the tragic and the happy elements are rather confusingly blended. When this is the case the play is called a tragi-comedy. We have an excellent example of this in *The Merchant of Venice*. With the cessation of Antonio's difficulties, and the joyous gathering of the young betrothed couples at Portia's beautiful home, we are filled with satisfaction. However, Shylock's plight rouses a pang of pity and there is a minor note in the dra-

Tragi-comedy

matic harmony here. Perhaps the broadening of our sympathies since Shakespeare's day has not a little to do with this, and it is entirely possible that the Elizabethan audiences who witnessed the play direct from the master's pen were less tolerant than we, and felt no such qualms. Perhaps having nothing but contempt for Shylock, they sensed no tragic element here, and viewed the whole as a straight piece of comedy.

If you have witnessed or read the play called *The Admirable Crichton* by Barrie, you will realize that it, too, is a tragi-comedy, and that while the conclusion is a very satisfactory one to the members of the aristocratic English family who have been shipwrecked on a deserted, tropical island, to the leading character, Crichton, the final outcome must take on the aspects of a tragedy. During the period of their confinement on the island, Crichton, the faithful family servant of long standing, unquestionably saves their lives and is able, through his manliness and marvelous resourcefulness, to protect and save them from every danger. Against these former lords of society who are utterly unable to cope with the problems of a primitive type of existence, Crichton looms like a superman in his efficiency and courage, dwarfing them all to complete insignificance. He reigns over them with the unquestioned authority of a king. The finest lady of the group is proud to accept his courtship and his petition for her hand in marriage. At this time, however, they are rescued and return again to their former life in England. In the final scene Crichton is shown serving them as in previous years in their London drawing-room — the perfect servant again, just as he had

been, during the interlude of their primitive life, their perfect and respected master. In running true to type as set by the standards of society he is the loser in a sense, and yet the hearts of the audience are utterly his, and from a certain viewpoint he is the winner in the dramatic conflict of the piece.

Julius Cæsar is almost invariably classed as a tragedy, although in a sense it falls near the boundary line of tragi-comedy. If we consider the case of Brutus alone, making him the protagonist, and Mark Antony the antagonist, the play is perhaps wholly tragedy; but Shakespeare has given us a very interesting study of values here, for the personality of Antony is so portrayed that the sympathy of the spectator is strongly drawn to his position in the action. At times he seems to fill the rôle of protagonist rather more than does Brutus, and one is often tempted to classify this play as tragi-comedy. Only the manner in which the playwright manages to switch our interest to the fortunes of Brutus toward the end makes it certain in our minds that this work is really tragedy. Our sympathies are stirred profoundly by the manliness and dignity of Brutus during those hours when, broken by the news of his wife's death, involved in quarrels with his nearest friend, and sensing oncoming disaster, he goes down to death himself with a stoicism that binds us to him, and gives to the play the unmistakable shadow of pure tragedy.

Farce

The subdivisions of the *drama* are sometimes difficult to define. For instance, it is not always easy to show the course of the boundary line between comedy and what is known as *farce*. Perhaps we may say

that when a comedy is filled with humor of a very broad nature, and the obstacles placed in the way of the protagonist are exceedingly preposterous and ridiculous, that comedy is a farce. In this form of drama all sorts of absurd and improbable situations may arise. The playwright does not necessarily strive to make the complications lifelike. The provocation of laughter is the principal aim. A false emphasis may be placed upon various trifling matters. The farce bears something of the relationship to more serious drama which the art of caricature bears to genuine portraiture. One or two of Shakespeare's plays fall into this class; in fact *The Taming of the Shrew* is a very good example. One of the cleverest modern farces ever penned is Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest.* It convulsed London audiences when it was first produced a generation ago and our audiences of to-day appear to revel in its quaint and mirth-provoking absurdities with no lessened sense of delight. The extraordinary and unreasonable obstacles which beset the young lovers in this whimsical play are in the nature of ridiculous viewpoints in which some of the minor conventions of society are warped into absurd proportions. To watch some of the characters and witness the situations in a play of this type, with its topsy-turvy perspective, is not unlike looking at a bit of life through those queer glasses with which we played as children, and which elongated some figures and broadened others quite beyond recognition, and sent us into gales of laughter.

Quite recently St. John Ervine wrote a farce called *The Lady of Belmont* which is based on *The Merchant of Venice,*

and which is a superlatively delightful bit. The little play is set at Portia's home in Belmont some years after the marriage of Bassanio and Portia. Here the old friends of the Shakespeare play are modernized, and the personality of each has undergone a change which renders the situations brimming with humor. All viewpoints are reversed, and old Shylock wins not only our pity, but our veneration and even our affection. A play which is worked out in this manner, or in the fashion of *The Importance of Being Earnest*, is sometimes called an *artificial comedy*, for, while seemingly the situations progress with a spontaneity marked by utter carelessness and abandon on the part of the writer, as a matter of fact, these works reflect so little of life as it really is that the author must actually exercise extreme care in planning his every detail.

There is one branch of comedy in which the playwright utilizes more of his imagination than in any other type of play, and this we call the *fantastic comedy*, or *dramatic fantasy*. Here the feeling of unreality is so strong, and the fanciful quality so noticeable, that very frequently there is an appeal not unlike the appeal of poetry, and the spectator finds himself carried away into an ideal environment quite different from the world we know. Reality is seldom considered in these fanciful plays, and Alice, when she stepped through the looking-glass, must have received an impression not unlike the feeling which is ours when the author of a charming dramatic fantasy leads us into the magic country which his genius has created. Some of the most alluring works of Shakespeare, Barrie, and Maeterlinck fall under this

Fantastic comedy or dramatic fantasy

classification, and during the last decade or two a host of delightful one-act plays by some of the newer writers have been fantastic comedies.

Barrie's famous *Peter Pan* and his mystical *Mary Rose* are splendid examples of the finest plays of this type, and Maeterlinck's *Blue Bird,* also a dramatic fantasy, has added in no small degree to the Belgian master's fame. Such works as *The Maker of Dreams* by Oliphant Down, and *Maid of France* by Harold Brighouse, are artistically handled examples of this type, and are delightful to read as well as to witness on the stage. Perhaps one of the reasons for the charm of the fantastic comedy lies in the fact that it leads us so completely out of this world of ours with its monotony, its cares, and its frequent sorrow and pain, into a more delightful and enchanting world where our troubles vanish as though touched by a wand of magic. Here all things are handled with due regard for picturesqueness and beauty of effect, and, too, we find in the symbolism of these plays a trend of thought that leads us to the contemplation of some one or more of the deeper truths of life.

Problem plays

Since man is a rational being and endowed with the capacity for thought, he takes delight in problems which bring into play his powers of reasoning. From childhood on we find zest in the solving of a puzzle. Because this is so, the *problem play,* like the problem novel, is a popular and deeply entertaining form. It deals with human beings and human experiences as they are played upon by such forces as conventions, laws, customs, or habits. It can readily be understood that human relationships are vitally affected by influences such

as these, and that problems of deep interest arise as a result. The more involved human life becomes in the march of civilization, the more complex these problems are likely to appear. The dramatist finds boundless material here for absorbing work, and a great number of the more serious plays of our day are problem plays. As was the case in the novel of propaganda or purpose, the problem at hand may cease to exist through the solution of the difficulty or through circumstantial change. When this occurs, a once popular and valuable play frequently loses its interest for us and ceases to be of value. A well-constructed, vital problem play, however, affords not only entertainment, but broadens the scope of our understanding as well, and often gives us food for serious thought.

The Norwegian dramatist, Ibsen, a playwright ranked by some critics as one of the great artists since Shakespeare, has given us some extremely powerful examples of the problem play. His realistic, vigorous method of treatment, with its directness and economy of diction, was peculiarly fitted for the play of this sort, and his famous *A Doll's House*, and *An Enemy of the People*, are two supremely successful examples of this variety of drama. The former pictures the dangers which threaten us in a social structure where custom and tradition make impossible the development of initiative and strength of character. The young wife and mother who is the protagonist in this play suddenly sees that there has never been a genuine relationship between her husband and herself that allowed for any real development of character on her part. Matters of business were never discussed in the home, and a wife who is the

mother of several children is forced by convention to remain in ignorance of all the problems of life which might exist outside her doll's house of a home. Her entire sphere was limited to the requirements of the nursery and the art of being a perfect decoration in her husband's dwelling. She was shielded from every blast, petted, and spoiled until she became, herself, a mere doll, an animated plaything and little more. In *A Doll's House* we witness Nora Helmer's sudden and painful awakening. We watch the evolution of a tragic snarl which her ignorance alone seems to precipitate; and when revolt flames within her heart and she sweeps from her home to "find herself" in the world without, keen for the acquisition of knowledge and opportunity for development, a door which slams off-stage accentuates the culmination of the action with the finality of a blow! The fact that this play caused a furor of criticism at the time of its initial presentation in Europe, shows us that its theme was a vital one. We in America were not beset with a problem of this sort for the proverbial freedom of opportunity for development among our sisters and wives has been a well-known factor in American life for a half-century at least. Ibsen's play was a powerful force in the change of viewpoint which has swept over Europe in the last two decades.

In *An Enemy of the People* the same writer again deals forcibly with a problem of great importance. Although his setting is a small European community, the evil which he combats vigorously has its roots deep in the meshes of human nature. He strikes a powerful blow at unscrupulous, human greed. When, in the play, the physician,

who is the protagonist, proclaims the danger to health and life, caused by certain unsanitary conditions of the baths which bring the little community wealth and fame as a health resort, we find him regarded by all as an enemy, and the spite of his neighbors renders his life hardly worth the living.

In France the dramatist, Brieux, has used this form with telling effect, as has Bjornson in Norway, and Galsworthy in England. In the hands of a skillful playwright it becomes a forceful medium in the battle against every sort of social evil. Like the novel of propaganda or purpose it is essentially didactic. That is to say, it instructs and teaches. For this reason the dramatist has two distinct and important aims in view here. In the first place, he must select the facts to be emphasized with extreme care so that at no point may his argument show weakness; in the second place, he must pay due attention to the matter of building a well-constructed and entertaining play. If he fails in either of these matters, the purpose for which he strives is thwarted and his efforts are fruitless.

The historical play

Another kind of play which we should note is the *historical drama*, frequently called the *chronicle play*. This type is not exactly a form by itself, for, like the historical novel, it may fall at once into more than one division of the larger group to which it belongs. Therefore it may be viewed from more than one angle and it would be entirely possible for the same play to be a problem play in a sense, and a member of the historical drama class as well. If a play has its basis in some of the events that are historical, or deals, in the main, with

one or more of the great characters of history, we call it historical drama. These plays frequently afford very fine opportunities for the art of impersonation on the part of the actor, and some of the efforts of our contemporary dramatists in writing this type of play have been very successful indeed.

Among the older historical dramas we find such plays as Shakespeare's *Henry V* and *Richard II*. Several of Ibsen's earlier plays, such as *The Pretenders* and *The Vikings*, were of this type, although he was later to win his position of eminence through other channels. If you have seen the popular actor, George Arliss, play *Disraeli*, you have witnessed a modern example of the historical drama which has charmed hundreds of audiences. The British dramatist and poet, John Drinkwater, is writing some exceedingly interesting historical dramas, and his *Abraham Lincoln* has received much favorable comment.

Melodrama

Another term which is commonly used in classifying a certain kind of play is the word *melodrama*. As the historical drama is not dissimilar in some respects to the historical novel, so the melodrama is, in a way, something like the romatic novel of adventure. In the melodrama the situations are often exaggerated to a degree, the personalities of the principal characters are frequently drawn in a superficial manner which can hardly be called characterization, and the events pile up into a tangle of obstacles which form the basis for a variety of hairbreadth escapes and exciting scenes. The heroine, who is the most beautiful of all ladies, is rescued from every sort of danger by the hero, or protagonist, who is invariably

as handsome as a Greek god and as chivalrous as Sir Galahad. Usually the antagonistic force is represented by a villain or a troup of villains who are pictured as unquestionably the worst men in the world. As a whole the playwright gives us little that is true to life. Life as we know it seldom presents such a thrilling and constant succession of highly exciting events. People as we know them are seldom utterly good or completely bad. Beauty is sometimes skin-deep only, and the homeliest man of our acquaintance may be an exceedingly charming personality, or possess a heart of pure gold.

The melodrama may be said to be a type of dramatic production in which the romantic element has run wild. As a specimen of the literature of escape it affords a certain mode of recreation and, therefore, has its place; but we should take pains to discriminate between this and the higher types of drama, and should realize the inconsistencies which frequently endow these plays with so many absurdities that they are not unlike parodies of real life.

A type of drama which is exceedingly popular at the present time is the *one-act play*. Contemporary dramatists of America, as well as those of almost every European country, have worked with this brief form until it has reached a very high degree of perfection. Technically it resembles the short story in several ways. There is the same economy of incident and diction; the same condensation of structural design. A singleness of purpose on the part of the playwright is manifest; unity of effect is the aim in view; the complications are handled with extreme directness of manner, and the

One-act plays

action transpires with a swiftness which demands perfect control on the part of the author. It is no proper medium for the efforts of a novice or a bungler, but in the hands of a skillful artist it becomes a most delightful and entertaining form of dramatic art.

Medieval forms

During the medieval period there originated in Europe several quaint dramatic forms, which, while they are seldom used to-day, are of interest to the student of the drama. They were neither written for, nor presented in, the theater, and in England, where the first theater was erected about the year 1576, some of these forms had probably been very popular before a theater was thought of. The earlier examples of these plays were doubtless the result of a much-felt need by the church for a means of presenting religious instruction. Later they were given by the guilds, or associations of organized craftsmen. The stage, as used by the guilds, was commonly a sort of platform on wheels, not unlike the floats made use of in our pageants and parades of to-day. The play might take place at any convenient street corner, open square, or innyard which would afford standing-room for the assembled crowd. These earliest plays were called *miracle plays* because the subject-matter was of a supernatural tone. They usually dealt with some event or some miraculous experience in the life of a saint. Very similar to these were the *mystery plays* which were frequently presented in a series of scenes or a *cycle*, and commonly had their origin in stories from the Bible.

Miracle plays and mystery plays

Another early type was the *morality play*. These, too, were religious in tone, and whereas they did not present stories from the Bible, they taught moral lessons in allegorical form, and were distinctly ethical in bearing, since they dealt with the forces of right and wrong. The protagonist, who might be the average human being, was embarrassed by obstacles in the guise of personified abstractions such as Pleasure, Greed, Folly, and similar antagonists. At the same time such qualities as Youth and Virtue might aid him in his quest for salvation. A very well-known example of the morality play is the one called *Everyman*.

Morality plays

Still another early form was the *masque*, which, originating in Italy, achieved great popularity among the nobility of England. It was spectacular in nature, giving the author a splendid chance for the exercise of his imagination and poetic talent. It was usually written to fit some special occasion or important festival. Often it was a gorgeous creation blending poetry, music, and the dance, and displaying costumes and scenic effects of exceptional beauty. There was little plot used in the masque but frequently a thread of allegory served to bind the sequence of thought in these delightful spectacles and to trace the pattern of a moral truth.

The masque

Ben Jonson, Shakespeare's friend, was especially successful as a writer of masques and entertained the court of King James with many fine examples. Probably the most beautiful serious masque in the English language is Milton's *Comus*. In nobility of thought and poetical quality of expression it is unsurpassed, and stands to-day, three

hundred years after it was written, as one of the masterpieces of English literature.

Just as in some of the literary forms previously mentioned we observed the use of certain attributes such as plot, characterization, and atmosphere, so in the drama we find these elements employed again. The plot we have already spoken of as having its origin in the conflict or struggle between the protagonist and antagonist. Wherever, during this conflict, a turning-point is reached, that variation in the action is known as the *climax*. This should not be confused with the point where the interest has reached its highest pitch, for these two points are not necessarily the same. The *climax* is simply the point where the trend of the action turns with certainty either for or against the protagonist, or hero. In *A Doll's House*, by Ibsen, it comes at the moment when Nora Helmer realizes the true aspect of her position in relation to the world and society in general. In *Macbeth* it is synonymous with the instant of Fleance's escape. From that moment the discerning witness may prophesy Macbeth's downfall.

Special attributes of the drama

Climax

The result of the dramatic conflict is called the *catastrophe*, or *dénouement*. It, of course, comes near the end of the play. In *Macbeth* it occurs with the entrance of Macduff bearing Macbeth's bloody head. In *Hamlet* it occurs in the ghastly moment when so many of the characters lie dead at Horatio's feet, following the scene of the duel. Frequently in Shakespeare's time a tragedy ended with the death of nearly every important character and a play closing in

Catastrophe

this manner came to be classified as an example of the so-called "tragedy of blood."

Characterization in the drama is not very different from that attribute as employed in the novel. The playwright must suggest the spirit, temperament, and personal traits of each of his characters by the skillful use of scenes and dialogues which reveal the hidden nature of each. To this the actor adds his efforts in the art of impersonation, and if both dramatist and actor are successful, the characters of the play appear to be genuine, living people, and the situations take on all the aspects of real life. If the characterization is poorly handled, however, we receive the impression that we are watching mere puppets pulled hither and yon about the stage on wires, and the lifelike illusion is destroyed. This is frequently the case with the characterization in a melodrama, and spoils the play for the critical spectator.

Characterization

Atmosphere, as used in the drama, becomes a powerful agent in the hands of a skillful playwright. It is often most valuable in heightening a definite effect which the dramatist has in mind. When properly handled, its greatest service is that of drawing the audience into the spirit of the hour and place in which any portion of the action is set. Shakespeare employed this attribute with telling results in many instances. *Hamlet* opens in the chill gloom of night on the ramparts of a castle. It is here that the ghostly lineaments of the murdered king are first discerned, and the audience is quite prepared by the atmospheric effect for the introduction of the supernatural element. In *King Lear* the famous scene upon the storm-

Atmosphere

swept heath, which some critics have called the most starkly tragic scene in all Shakespeare, is completely in keeping with the trend of the action. The desperate situation of the aged and broken king is driven home to the audience with tremendous force, stirring the pity and sympathy of even the most unfeeling witness, and the art with which the master dramatist has handled the atmosphere is responsible for this in no slight degree. In *Macbeth* the supernatural element embodied by the witches is always introduced in an atmosphere of eerie gloom. The murder of Duncan takes place in the shadowy halls of the silent castle at midnight. Banquo is murdered in the black gloom of a starless night. The entire atmosphere of the play is one teeming with the power of darkness and filled with suggestions of treachery, murder, and terror. In Ibsen's *Peer Gynt* the atmosphere toward the end, where Peer is lost among the mists that veil the mountain slopes and blot out every vestige of a trail, is utterly appropriate in every way. Peer is drawn as the very epitome of the spirit of compromise, a vacillating, good-natured booby, whose habits of sloth and indecision grow until they strangle every property of manhood that should be his. The mists that shut in upon him are quite symbolical of the intangible influences which have befogged his life and paralyzed his will. Action and atmosphere here are very deftly blended.

The skillful use of atmosphere, while not perhaps an absolute essential to a particular play, is, in general, one of the most valuable factors of the dramatist's art. Through this attribute the playwright emphasizes those impressions which prepare the spectator for what is to transpire and,

in a sense, augments the quality of dramatic suspense. In this way he leads the audience into a sympathetic relationship with the setting of his play and the trend of its action.

In concluding, then, let us classify the *drama* as that form of literary art which presents a story through action. It is divided into two inclusive classes known as *tragedy* and *comedy*. In every drama there exists a *conflict*. The leading character is called the *protagonist;* the character or force which opposes him, the *antagonist.* In a tragedy the protagonist is overcome by these antagonistic forces; in a comedy the antagonistic forces are overcome by the protagonist. Sometimes, however, a play contains the elements of tragedy and comedy combined, and such a play is called a *tragi-comedy.*

Summary

When a comedy is filled with very broad humor, and the obstacles overcome by the protagonist are absurd and ridiculous in nature, we call the play a *farce.*

When a play is exceedingly fanciful, or even poetic in feeling, and takes little count of reality, it is called a *dramatic fantasy* or *fantastic comedy.*

One of the very important types of drama is the *problem play.* Like the problem novel it deals with human beings and human experiences as they are affected by conventions, laws, customs, or habits.

Another kind of play is the *historical drama*, or *chronicle play.* Like the historical novel, it draws its subject matter from the events and characters of history.

The *melodrama* is a type of play in which the situations are exaggerated and the characters are little more than puppets controlled by the action. Thrilling and exciting

scenes are presented and little attention is paid to the problem of making the drama true to life.

During recent years a great many *one-act plays* have been written. Technically they resemble the short story in some ways. There is great economy of both diction and episode. Unity of effect is the aim and these brief works deal usually with one situation and are greatly condensed in structural arrangement.

Among the medieval forms of the drama we find the miracle play, the mystery play, and the morality play. The *miracle play* presented subject matter which was supernatural in tone and usually had to do with some event or miraculous experience in the life of a saint. The *mystery play* owed its origin to some story from the Bible. The *morality play* taught a lesson in allegorical form. The protagonist here often represented the average man, and such abstractions as Pleasure, Greed, Folly, and the like, served as antagonistic forces. At the same time the protagonist might be aided by such qualities as Youth or Virtue.

The *masque* was a spectacular production with little plot but with a distinct emphasis on beauty of effect. It was usually written for the celebration of some special occasion or festival. It made use of poetry, music, and the dance, displayed splendid costumes, and charmed the witness with fine scenic effects. The thought was frequently of a very lofty tone and presented a moral lesson.

The *plot* in a drama has its origin in the *conflict* between the protagonist and the antagonist. When, during the conflict, a turning-point is reached, that point is known as

the *climax*. The result of the conflict is known as the *catastrophe* or *dénouement*.

Characterization is employed in the drama in a manner similar to its use in the novel. It has to do with the art by means of which the playwright makes the characters of the play appear to be genuine, living people.

Atmosphere in the drama is that quality by the use of which the playwright draws his audience into the spirit of the hour and place in which any portion of the action is set.

SECTION IX

POETRY

Poetry is, perhaps, of all the forms of literature, the most difficult to define. The reason for this doubtless lies in the fact that it is the most imaginative and ethereal form known to us. The word *poet*, itself, comes from an old Greek word which means a *creator* or a *maker*. Many writers have attempted to formulate a good definition of poetry, but these definitions, while helpful, have differed greatly. It has been called an imaginative presentation of life, but this is perhaps too inclusive. The great poet Wordsworth said, "Poetry is the imaginative expression of strong feeling, usually rhythmical . . .," and Matthew Arnold found that "Poetry is simply the most beautiful, impressive and widely effective mode of saying things." The poet Heine's definition is almost poetry in itself. He said, "Lyrical poetry is much the same in every age, as the songs of the nightingales in every springtime." Among our modern poets and critics, Louis Untermeyer has cleverly said, "Poetry is a wild attempt to define the indefinable," and Marguerite Wilkinson stated the opinion that "Poetry is the sharing of life in patterns of rhythmical words." There are many, many definitions to be found, and their great number, alone, shows us that poetry is such an intimate, personal thing, that few poets have found the

Definitions

definitions of others entirely satisfying. However, there are some general points on which the majority of writers and critics agree, and the study of these general aspects and properties of poetry will prove of great value to us in understanding the art of our great singers and in sharing with them their moments of supreme happiness, and perhaps supreme grief, in their experiences with life. It will also be of great help in aiding us to comprehend their unceasing attempts to crystallize the beauty of those moments in enduring, singing words.

Figures

Often the poet speaks to us through symbols, or expressions in which there is a double or a hidden meaning, and these symbols are closely allied to what is called figurative language. *Figures* have been used so extensively in the great body of literature that they have come to be called by certain specialized names.

One of the commonest figures is *simile*, where a resemblance between two things is expressed and is introduced by such a word as *like* or *as*. When Emily Dickinson says, in speaking of a mountain,

> The seasons played around his knees,
> Like children round a sire . . .

she is employing simile.

Another very common figure is the *metaphor*. Here the poet gives to a certain object the attributes of another. For instance, when Alfred Noyes writes

> The road was a ribbon of moonlight over the purple moor . . .

he has given us a metaphor.

A slightly more difficult figure to distinguish is that of *synecdoche*. Here an object is used in place of one similar to it, or a part of something may be used to signify the whole. Sometimes the container is used for the thing contained. When we say, "He sent a thousand lances," meaning a thousand lancers, we employ synecdoche.

Very close to synecdoche is *metonymy*. This figure substitutes one object or thought for another because the one is so nearly associated with the other in time or cause. Thus, when we say, "The pen is mightier than the sword," we refer to the results achieved by the pen and the sword and our figure is metonymy.

One of the most common figures is *personification*. Here human characteristics are given to inanimate objects or to ideas. When Alan Seeger wrote his famous "I Have a Rendezvous with Death," he personified Death, saying,

> It may be he shall take my hand
> And lead me into his dark land.

Another very common figure is *apostrophe* which is a direct address to inanimate objects as if they were living, or a direct address to those who are dead or absent as though they were present. When Milton says,

> Hence, loathed Melancholy!

he employs apostrophe, and we may observe that often apostrophe and personification appear to be very similar.

Another frequently used figure is *alliteration*. This is a figure where the writer intentionally makes use of the repetition of the same sound or letter in order to produce a definite effect. In Longfellow's "The Courtship of Miles

Standish," he uses this figure very effectively when, in likening the savage to a serpent, he repeats the sound of the sibilant "s" so skillfully:

Silently out of the room then glided the glistening savage,
Bearing the serpent's skin, and seeming himself like a serpent,
Winding his sinuous way in the dark to the depths of the forest.

When read aloud the passage above fairly hisses, and the impression of the serpentlike disappearance of the savage is almost unbelievably real.

Another figure, *antithesis*, is very simple, and consists of contrasted statements or ideas only. For an example take Shakespeare's lines:

Look like the innocent flower,
But be the serpent under't.

Climax, like antithesis, is very easily understood and is merely an arrangement of ideas in such order that their importance steadily rises. Cæsar's line, "I came, I saw, I conquered," is an example of this.

An *epigram* is a short, pithy saying in which a great deal of meaning may be condensed into an exceedingly brief statement, such as, "The child is father of the man."

In an *epithet* we find often an apt joining of adjective with noun, so that each suggests the other. "The virgin snow" and "the black-winged wind" are good examples. Sometimes the descriptive term is linked with a word with which it does not naturally belong, and this is called a *transferred epithet*. For an example of this observe Tennyson's line,

Melissa shook her doubtful curls.

A very common figure of speech is *hyperbole* which is really nothing but an exaggeration for the purpose of producing a definite effect. It is an attempt to bind the attention of the reader with an uncommon or startling idea. Our everyday speech is full of hyperbole. Young people are prone to make use of it too often, thereby minimizing its value. Common examples of this figure are such expressions as "beaten to a shred," and "dressed to kill."

Irony, while really barely a figure of speech in itself, frequently employs figures of speech in its content. It states directly the opposite of what it means to convey and this heightens the effect produced. When we use such expressions as "my fine fellow," and mean exactly the contrary, we are employing irony. Other closely related forms are sarcasm and satire.

Euphemism is the use of expressions which modify thoughts or statements which are unpleasant or disagreeable, making them milder and less offensive. For instance we may say "he exaggerates" when we mean "he lies."

Onomatopœia identifies the sounds of words with their meanings. Such words as *hum*, *splash*, and *bang* afford examples. Sometimes the onomatopoetic effect of a whole line or passage is very marked. Notice the following from G. K. Chesterton:

> Strong gongs groaning as the guns boom far.

If you study the brief list of figures mentioned above carefully, you will see that they are important instruments, indeed, in the hands of the writer. There are a number of others of varying importance, but these are, perhaps, the

ones which occur most frequently and, therefore, are most worthy of our attention.

Of course the purpose of the poet is to stir our emotions and feelings, and to increase, if possible, our appreciation of all that is great and beautiful and valuable in life. In the process of creating his effect he makes use of a number of what are sometimes called *poetic properties*. He may appeal to us through our love of verbal music, for the ear trained to the music of words finds a distinct pleasure in the tonal quality of word-combinations. The English poet, Swinburne, sometimes emphasized this quality so strongly that some of his poems are almost like musical compositions in which the meaning is entirely secondary to the tonal effect, and is sometimes barely discernible at all.

Poetic properties

One of the most essential properties of poetry is *rhythm*. The word itself comes from an old Greek word meaning *flow*. To-day we use it to denote the more or less regular recurrence of the stress in a line. It is wavelike in process and produces a swinging sequence of sound. In a broad sense rhythm seems to be almost a fundamental quality of all things that live or move. Without this flow or swing there would be no life or evidence of force in poetry. The modern poets have made more varied use of rhythm than many of those of former times and have brought to life some very interesting results of which more will be said later.

Rhythm

Another important element in poetry is *meter*. The word means *measure* and it has to do with the exact arrangement of accents in a line. It is a more limited

and exact matter than rhythm, and whereas rhythm has to do with the cadence of the entire line, meter is concerned with the syllables and accents of the individual word. The process of determining the sort of meter employed in a line is termed *scansion*, and a single metrical unit is called a *foot*. There are a number of kinds of metrical feet, and in testing or scanning lines for these feet we sometimes place a *macron* (—) over each accented syllable, and a *breve* (⏑) over each unaccented one. This shows us at a glance where the accents occur and aids us in determining the kind of meter used. The following line from Shakespeare would be marked thus:

Meter

⏑ — ⏑ — | ⏑ — | ⏑ — ⏑ — |
All loss|es are | restored, | and sor|rows end. |

You will notice that after each foot we place a perpendicular bar and that in the line above there are five of the metrical feet. It should be noted as we go on that a foot may contain from one to three syllables according to kind.

The *iambus* has two syllables, and the accent occurs on the second, thus (⏑ —). The line from Shakespeare, above, has five *iambic* feet, therefore.

The *trochee* also has two syllables, but the accent is reversed, falling on the first syllable, as follows: (— ⏑). Here is a line from Longfellow, and in it you will notice that there are four trochaic feet:

— ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ |
Tell me | not in | mournful | numbers |

The *anapest* has three syllables with the accent on the last (⏑ ⏑ —). The following line from Cowper has three *anapestic* feet:

⏑ ⏑ — ⏑ ⏑ — ⏑ ⏑ — |
I must fin|ish my jour|ney alone. |

The *dactyl*, like the anapest, has three syllables, but the accent is on the first (— ∪ ∪). It is sometimes compared to waltz-time. This line from Tennyson is an example:

— ∪ ∪ | — ∪ ∪ |
Cannon to | right of them |

Here there are two *dactylic* feet.

In addition to the kinds above, there are three irregular feet: the *spondee*, the *pyrrhic*, and the *amphibrach*. They are not found in sequence in entire lines, but are really substitute feet, not common in English poetry. The *spondee* has two syllables, each of which is accented (– –). One may be found in the following line from Pope:

∪ — | ∪ — | ∪ — | ∪ — | — — |
And ten | low words | oft creep | in one | dull line. |

The *pyrrhic* has two syllables, each of which is unaccented (∪ ∪). One of these *pyrrhic* feet occurs in the following line from Dryden:

∪ — | ∪ — | ∪ — ∪ ∪ | ∪ — |
But fooled | with hope | men fav|or the | deceit. |

The *amphibrach* has three syllables with the accent on the second (∪ — ∪). The following line from Burns will show this:

∪ — ∪ | ∪ — ∪ | ∪ — ∪ | — |
Flow gently, | sweet Afton, | among thy | green braes, |

You will notice that this line is irregular and that the last foot is an *iambus*.

Another matter that comes to our attention in the scansion of poetry is that of the *classification* of lines. This has to do with the number of feet occurring in each line. When a line is composed of a single metrical foot it is called *monometer*. Here is an example:

Classification of lines

∪ — |
| Alas! |

This you may notice is *iambic monometer*. A line with two feet is called *dimeter*. It is like this:

˘ — ˘ —
Let me | not pause. |

This, you may notice, is *iambic dimeter*.

When there are three feet in a line, that line is called *trimeter*, and here is an example of *trochaic trimeter:*

— ˘ — ˘ — ˘
Tell me | little | maiden. |

A four-foot line is called *tetrameter*, and the following, from the poet Ralph Hodgson, is *iambic tetrameter:*

˘ — ˘ — ˘ — ˘ —
I heard | no more | of bird | or bell. |

Five feet in a line give us *pentameter*. This is one of the commonest lines in English poetry. Most of Shakespeare's work was written in pentameter, employing the iambic foot. Here is an example from that master-poet:

˘ — ˘ — ˘ — ˘ — ˘ —
I fly | thee, for | I would | not in|jure thee. |

Hexameter is a line of six feet. The following line from Longfellow is *dactylic hexameter:*

— ˘ ˘ — ˘ ˘ — ˘ ˘ — ˘ ˘
This is the | forest pri|meval. The | murmuring |
— ˘ ˘ ˘ — ˘
pines and the | hemlocks, |

Heptameter is a line of seven feet, and here is an example of *iambic heptameter* from Kipling:

˘ — ˘ — ˘ — ˘ — ˘ — ˘ —
Oh, East | is East, | and West | is West, | and ne|ver
˘ — ˘ —
the twain | shall meet. |

The longest line, and one that, like *heptameter*, is seldom used, is *octameter*. Here is a line of *iambic octameter:*

⏑ — ⏑ — | ⏑ — | ⏑ — | ⏑ — | ⏑ — |
O, ev|ery man | must do | his part, | for all | the world |
⏑ — ⏑ —
has need | of it. |

It is interesting to note here that almost every line of poetry has a slight rhythmical pause occurring at some place within it. It cuts the line at one place or another when the line is read or recited naturally. It is called the *cæsura*, and the word, itself, means *cut*. A line may have no cæsura, however, or it may have more than one. Notice the following from Longfellow and you will see that there are two cæsuras, as indicated by the crosses:

Cæsura

Bearded with moss × and in garments green × indistinct in the twilight.

It is a common thing for students to confuse the terms *stanza* and *verse*. In the strict sense of the word, a *verse* is a single line of poetry; while the *stanza* is made up of several lines or verses, and may be, indeed, a complete poem in itself. Usually, however, it is a subdivision of a longer work, and each stanza is uniform with the other stanzas in the poem. There are a number of kinds of stanzas but perhaps the ones given below are the ones used most frequently.

Stanza forms

The shortest real stanza is the *couplet*. It is composed of two lines which rime, and when they are written in iambic pentameter they are called *heroic couplets*. An entire poem written in heroic couplets is said to be *heroic verse*.

A stanza with three lines may be called a *triplet*, although, strictly speaking, all the lines of a triplet should end with the same rime-sound. If we let the final rime-sound of a line be represented by a letter of the alphabet, for the sake of convenience, we find that the true triplet rimes as follows: aaa, bbb, etc. Here is an example from the poet, Elliot:

> Dark, deep, and cold the current flows
> Unto the sea where no wind blows,
> Seeking the land which no one knows.

A *quatrain* is a stanza of four lines. All the better-known forms are set in iambic meter, although there are varying rime-schemes. The commoner rime-schemes are as follows: aabb, abab, or abba. However, Fitzgerald, in his beautiful English arrangement of the work of Omar Khayyám, presents his quatrains in the form aaba. This produces the following effect:

> I sometimes think that never blows so red
> The Rose as where some buried Cæsar bled;
> That every Hyacinth the Garden wears
> Dropt in her Lap from some once lovely Head.

In the very common *ballad* meter we usually find one of the three following rime-schemes: abcb, abac, or aabb. Lines one and three are usually iambic tetrameter, and lines two and four are usually iambic trimeter.

The *quintet* has five lines which may be interrimed in five or six different ways. The *limerick*, which is familiar to us all, is the commonest of these five-line stanzas, and rimes in this fashion: aabba.

A *sestet* has six lines, but there are a number of variations in rime-scheme possible. It is of particular interest to us in our study of the *sonnet*, and will be treated more fully under that heading.

The *Spenserian stanza* is composed of nine lines. There are eight lines of iambic pentameter followed by a ninth line of iambic hexameter. The long ninth line is called an *Alexandrine*. Spenser wrote his famous *Faerie Queen* in this form, and the stanza takes its name from him. Here are lines of his to illustrate the stanza:

> Yet all these were, when no man did them know,
> Yet have from wisest ages hidden been;
> And later times things more unknown shall show.
> Why then should witless man so much misween,
> That nothing is, but that which he hath seen?
> What, if within the moon's fair shining sphere,
> What, if, in every other star unseen,
> Of other worlds he happily should hear?
> He wonder would much more; yet such to some appear.

A *refrain* is a group of words, a phrase, or even complete lines, which may be repeated for effect at intervals in a poem. A refrain may be likened to the chorus in a song.

Just as there are certain fixed types and patterns in architecture, painting, design, music, and other arts, so there are certain types of poems which follow definite rules in the matter of structure. The poet, in choosing one of these forms in which to express his ideas, follows regulations quite as exacting as the rules laid down for football, or tennis, or auction bridge. There are other types which we will look into later where

Poem structure

great freedom of arrangement is allowed, but of the fixed forms, the ones that follow demand our attention.

One of the oldest forms is that of the *ode*. It was a scheme probably first adopted by the ancient Greek poet, Pindar.

Ode

In the ode there are three distinct movements: the *strophe*, the *antistrophe*, and the *epode*. The strophe and antistrophe were usually chanted by a chorus while they moved up or down the sides of a theater. The epode was chanted after the action had ceased. The first two movements were set in iambic meter; the third, in trochaic. The structure of the ancient odes is too complicated for limited study, and the great poets of modern times have varied the form extensively, and thereby made possible a wider use of it. These irregular odes are doubtless best suited to the modern singer and have given us such beautiful works as Wordsworth's "Ode on Immortality" and Keats' "Ode to a Nightingale."

In the *sonnet* we have a form which is very difficult to write with perfection, but when it is used by a master-poet

Sonnet

it is one of the most interesting and beautiful of all the shorter lyric forms. It was introduced into England from Italy by Wyatt and Surrey, two English scholars, who were of the generation just previous to Shakespeare's day. It was very widely used, and is widely used to-day. There are two general kinds of sonnets: the Italian, or Petrarchan, and the English, or Shakespearian. Both the Italian and the English forms have fourteen lines. The Italian sonnet has two parts; an *octave*, which rimes abbaabba, and a *sestet* which usually rimes, cdecde or cdcdcd. Both English and Italian forms are written in iambic pen-

tameter. In the Italian type the octave commonly introduces the subject of the poem, and may raise, in the reader's mind, a doubt, a problem to be solved, a memory, or a question. The sestet handles the solution or frames the answer. The expression of both thought and imagery in a sonnet must be very clear and the whole must produce an effect of unity, or oneness. The sonnet is so brief that there is no opportunity for anything but the most careful sort of writing. It must be delicately chiseled, and therefore it has been likened to a finely carved cameo. If you will look at Wordsworth's famous sonnet, "The World Is Too Much with Us," you will find a perfect example of the Italian form.

The English, or Shakespearian form, is very different. There are only two points wherein it resembles the Italian type: it has fourteen lines, when regular, and it is written in iambic pentameter. Its structure is so different, however, that it produces a quite dissimilar effect. It has no octave or sestet, but is composed of three quatrains riming abab, cdcd, efef, and ends with a rimed couplet, gg. Practically any of the sonnets of Shakespeare will afford splendid examples for study.

Forms which employ the refrain

The forms of verse which we now take up are not common to-day and are so strictly governed by rules of construction as to make them not only difficult to write well, but also difficult for many modern readers to enjoy. They are old French and Italian arrangements, for the most part, and uniformly employ the *refrain.*

The *rondeau* has thirteen lines, usually placed in three

groups. However, the refrain, which is repeated at the end of the second and third groups, gives it the appearance of a fifteen-line lyric. The meter is usually iambic tetrameter, and the refrain is merely a repetition of the words which form the first two metrical feet of the first line of the poem. There are five lines in the first group and the rime-scheme is aabba. The second group contains three lines as follows: aab, and these three lines are here followed by the refrain. The third group has five lines again, riming aabba, also followed by the refrain. John McCrae's famous war poem, "In Flanders Fields" will give you a beautiful example.

The longest of these old forms is the *ballade*. There are three eight-line stanzas, and a quatrain, called an *envoy*. The refrain is the last line of the first stanza, and it reappears as the final line of each stanza, as it is also the final line of the envoy. The rime-schemes of the stanzas are thus: ababbcb (refrain riming with c); while the envoy rimes bcb (refrain riming with c). There are usually three rime-sounds, only, for the entire poem. The meter is iambic tetrameter. Perhaps no poet of recent years has done more with this form than Andrew Lang. His "Ballade of Middle Age" furnishes a good example.

The *triolet* is a dainty form of eight lines. The meter may vary but there are two rime-sounds, only. The first, fourth, and seventh lines are identical, while the second and eighth lines are also absolutely alike. The rime-scheme runs abaaabab. The meter may vary. Here is an example by the English poet, Austin Dobson, which gives a very good idea of a neatly turned triolet:

I intended an Ode,
  But it turned out a Sonnet,
It began à la mode,
I intended an Ode;
But Rose crossed the road
  In her latest new bonnet.
I intended an Ode,
  And it turned out a Sonnet.

The *rondel* has thirteen or fourteen lines. It is usually divided more or less like the *rondeau*, but it is a variable form. The second line-group often ends with a refrain which repeats the first two lines of the poem. The third line-group sometimes keeps the refrain as the lines were in the previous group, and sometimes uses the first line of the poem, only. Thus rondels may be of either thirteen or fourteen lines, as stated above. The meter is commonly iambic tetrameter, and the rime-scheme runs abbaaba babbaa. In the type rimed in this fashion, the first, seventh, and thirteenth lines are identical; the second and eighth lines are also alike. For an interesting example see Austin Dobson's "The Wanderer."

The *villanelle* has six stanzas. There are five of three lines each, and a sixth, or final stanza, of four lines. In the first, third, and fifth stanzas the final lines are identical; also the last lines of the second and fourth stanzas are identical. The two repeated lines are the last two lines of the sixth, or final stanza. Iambic tetrameter is the common meter, and the rime-scheme runs as follows: aba, aba, aba, aba, aba, abba. The poems of either Ernest Dowson or Oscar Wilde will give you good examples of the villanelle.

It should be remembered that there are a number of poets who have experimented with these old forms of verse, and that they have sometimes made variations. Since this is so you may be puzzled at times in recognizing these intricate types. Also, if it seems to you that they are artificial, and strained for effect, you must consider that they were probably first made use of at a time when, in general, only the nobility and the scholars were attempting poetry at all, and that the forms doubtless reflect the artificiality of the age and environment in which they originated.

If you should desire to read a more detailed study of these technically interesting kinds of poetry, you can find a number of books listed at the end of this text which will furnish you with further information.

You may have noticed that in the poetry study which we have already accomplished, the classifications have been made according to the poem-structure and not according to the nature of the poem's content or thought. When we consider the content, or mood, or purpose of a poem, we find that we can conveniently place most poetry in one or another of three groups. These three groups are designated as *lyrical poetry*, *narrative poetry*, and *dramatic poetry*.

Classification as to content

The *lyric* takes its name from the old musical instrument, the lyre. It is a poem of strong personal feeling or emotion, and therefore draws the reader into very intimate contact with the poet. Its diction, or wording, should be musical, and since these poems are generally brief, it is possible for a fine poet to create intense, colorful

Lyric

lyrics which really sing to our inner ear as we read. There should be a sense of unity about the lyric; it should be gracefully handled, and the emotional force should at no point be allowed to lapse. In the briefer types there is often a rising tide of emotion culminating in a climax of intense feeling at the end.

Of *narrative poetry* little needs be said since it is extremely easy to distinguish. It is the sort of poetry which tells a story. Undoubtedly the finest type of narrative poem is the *epic*. Usually the epic deals with the life-story and adventures of some national hero, or possibly the experiences of some important group of characters. It may have its origin in mythology, or folk-lore, or history. Supernatural forces may be introduced, and usually there is a sense of majesty, or dignity, combined with breadth of scope, which gives to the well-planned, and skillfully executed epic an effect of grandeur seldom to be found in the other kinds of poetry.

Narrative poetry

The *ballad* should not be confused with the French *ballade* which we have already considered. The ballad is a short story told in simple, easily understood verse. The earliest ballads were really folk-songs in a sense, and were the literary wealth of the common people. In our own times the poets have made use of this form for a wide expression of feeling. The ballad may be gay or sad in nature, and is sometimes given the delicate emotional tone of the lyric, and again, it may present its story with the peculiar power found in dramatic poetry. The atmosphere of a by-gone age often envelops us as we read the ringing lines of a good ballad. "The Highwayman," by

Ballad

Alfred Noyes, will give you a splendid example of modern ballad treatment.

Idyll

The *idyll* is another type of narrative poem, but here the emphasis is on the descriptive element. Unlike the ballad, it is not popular in its appeal, and is frequently a work of high artistic tone. The pictorial quality is stressed and imagery plays an important part. Idylls which deal with country life are sometimes called *pastorals*. The name idyll means a small type, form, or little picture.

Dramatic poetry

Dramatic poetry is only that poetry which obeys some of the laws of the drama, and is arranged in dramatic form. You will readily see that the terms *tragedy*, *comedy*, and *melodrama*, as well as other names applicable to plays, may be used at times here. Some of our greatest poets have produced their finest works in this field. Shakespeare's plays are magnificent examples, and almost every civilized nation has a wealth of dramatic poetry cherished among its literary treasures.

Poetry of to-day

One of the most interesting things which has occurred in the recent development of any of the arts is the poetry movement of to-day. Our own country has been particularly active in this field, and so this matter should be especially interesting for us. During the past two or three decades poets have been experimenting with all sorts of forms of poetry. Fascinating results have been achieved and many new angles of approach to poetic presentation have been explored. The cause of this new movement is not exactly clear to us as yet, but some important elements may be considered. When

we study the development of any of the arts we find that progress does not seem to move in an unbroken trend, but rather that there is a period of experimentation from time to time followed by periods of artistic lethargy or inaction. These lethargic lapses are not a waste of time apparently. They are probably times when the world is absorbing new ideas, or to put it simply, getting used to new methods of artistic expression. Ideas that are new and unfamiliar in any field of endeavor are always grasped first by those who have been actually engaged in that field. Discoveries in science or medicine or mechanics are always most quickly understood by those who have long been studying these matters and experimenting with them. This is quite as true with the arts, and if you investigate the life work of some of our great artists or composers or poets, you will find that it took the world years sometimes to understand just what they were attempting to express. Wagner produced operas which were once looked upon as failures; the great French painter, Millet, found his work scoffed at when he attempted to exhibit it; the English poet, Keats, was laughed at in his day. As time goes on, however, if the artist has something of value to give us, the world finally understands and appreciates his efforts. The work ceases to seem strange to us because of its novelty and originality, and grows constantly in beauty as we become more intimately acquainted with it.

The causes for the periods of experimentation are difficult to determine, but probably they are in part due to a sort of "divine discontent" which seems to be very frequently a characteristic of great minds — an indefinable urge to seek

new fields of thought and new methods of work. Probably our civilization is mainly due to this search for the new and the unknown. With this spirit there seems to exist a strong feeling of reaction away from the methods of the past. With the creative artist this feeling of discontent, and the urge to produce something original and intimately a part of himself, finds its outlet in work that often appears, at first, startlingly different from the work of those who have for some generations preceded him. At times whole groups of poets or painters or musicians have seemed to give expression to their emotions and thoughts in forms so novel that a whole movement, as we call it, has been set under way. In the realm of poetry the first years of this century have marked just such a development in England and America. In our own country the work of the experimentalists has been varied and of exceedingly wide scope, and while much of the work will, perhaps, not stand the test of time, yet there is doubtless a great body of it which, through its freshness of conception, its true reflection of the spirit of our age, and its novel beauty of both form and content, is destined to find a permanent place in our literature. In addition to this, if it is true that one sometimes succeeds through failure, much of the experimental work which is not artistically a success in itself has served a most useful purpose in opening up new avenues of technic, or method, wherein the poets have eventually found a pathway to truly fine and strikingly original work.

Experimentalists

One of the most daring experimentalists of our time was Amy Lowell, who, making a deep study of the old French, Italian, and even Chinese forms, used

them frequently as a background for modern work of an extremely interesting sort. She also experimented widely with free verse and polyphonic prose, of which more will be said later.

Edgar Lee Masters, possibly influenced by the ancient Greek anthologies, has sometimes given us brief, unrimed masterpieces in very free rhythms, such as his "Anne Rutledge" and "Lucinda Matlock," which appeared in his *Spoon River Anthology*.

Robert Frost has offered a distinctly individual note, not so much in the structure of his poems as in the fresh, personal, and quietly beautiful manner with which he has invested the spirit of rural New England with subtle charm. With the sure touch of a great painter, he envelops his characters so skillfully with atmosphere that they seem to melt into the backgrounds which he paints so well in verse, and like the trees that clothe New England's hills, they seem, indeed, children of the very soil. In addition to this his whimsical gift of philosophy lends unmistakable charm to almost everything he writes.

Another New England poet, Edwin Arlington Robinson, gives to his character portrayals the clear, clean-cut precision of an engraving, and his power of analysis in the matter of human impulses, couched, as it invariably is, in the simplest sort of diction and quite devoid of any unnecessary decoration, gives his work a realistic quality that has seldom been equaled. We feel in it the strength of finely tempered steel.

Vachel Lindsay, when at his best, thrills us with his visual force, making us actually see the screeching autos as they

tear along the Santa Fé trail in the poem of that name. Again, he drops us into a "negro fairyland" beside the Congo; and yet again, he weaves for us a Chinese tapestry of colorful beauty in "The Chinese Nightingale." His robust rhythms fairly bring us to our feet and set us dancing with their hypnotic, swinging accents.

Edna St. Vincent Millay is producing work that haunts us. In the field of lyric poetry she is seldom surpassed, and her swift but splendidly controlled emotional fire gives to her verse a vital quality that has all the attributes of genius. At her best she creates a verbal music which makes the reading of her lines a process of sheer delight to the reader with a well-trained ear.

Carl Sandburg, an original genius, sings to us, often in unrimed verse, of every sort of daily experience. His subject matter is gleaned from every phase of modern life. Brutal in the treatment of his theme at times, he, nevertheless, sings powerfully of the welter of the teeming, busy life of our day, and a Chicago stockyard or a steel foundry makes ample and fitting grist for his mill.

Across the seas such poets as John Masefield, William Butler Yeats, Wilfrid Wilson Gibson, and Walter de la Mare have produced splendid work.

Masefield is exceedingly versatile. His work is at times robust and vigorous, and at times delicate and lyrical. If you read passages from "Dauber" first, and then turn to "The Daffodil Fields" or "Midsummer Night," you will be filled with wonder that the same pen could have written in such variable vein.

The poetry of William Butler Yeats is filled with mystical

beauty. His lyrics are often touched with just an echo of sadness — what is sometimes called an "other world" tone — and his poetical dramas have probably not been surpassed by the poets of our day.

Wilfrid Wilson Gibson, like our own Robert Frost, writes of the common people of his country, usually with great simplicity of style. Many of his poems are colloquial in diction, and dramatic in feeling, and are often very tragic in a realistic, moving manner.

Probably no poet writing in England weaves more purely imaginative poetry than Walter de la Mare. He is the master of haunting music and tantalizing rhythms. Some of his short lyrics are so beautifully turned that they suggest to the reader a lovely bit of old lace or a beautifully carved cameo. It matters little whether he writes of moonlight, or a sunrise across fields of snow, or of a little boy who must take disagreeable medicine, every subject which he touches upon seems to glow with the glamour of magic. His music delights us, and his lines, once read, come back to us again and again with enchanting insistence. Always, as he sings, fairyland seems just around the corner. When you read "The Listeners" with its wonderfully subtle rhythm or "Silver" or "Nod," you will see exactly what is meant.

These are only a few of the host of present-day poets who are doing creditable, interesting work. In spite of what we sometimes hear to the contrary, our own is a poetical age, and the romance of thrilling achievement is all about us. The two centuries which followed the discovery of America gave to England such a wealth of wonderful poetry as had

not been produced for ages. There was the conquest of the new world and endless warring for the acquisition and control of new empires. Poetry seems to flourish in an age of struggle and achievement. It is, perhaps, possible to draw the parallel between the sixteenth century in Europe, and our own age in which the greatest war in history is simultaneous with the miraculous conquest of the air. At any rate the years immediately following the Great War have been exceedingly rich in their contribution to the poetical wealth of both England and America.

We now come to the consideration of what the poets, previously mentioned as experimentalists, have tried to do. Perhaps it is possible to study the technical side of their work in something the same manner which we would employ in considering the experiments of a scientist in a research laboratory. Let us call to mind first what we have noted before, that a poem, like any artistic production, should be in the form of a design or pattern and that in our study of this design we should view the whole poem as a unit and as something that has evolved from the thought and emotion of the poet into a complete entity or whole. If this is so, it follows that there must be *balance*, and a certain *harmony*, between design and thought; otherwise, we are confused by the contiguity of matters that do not properly belong together. In such a case the poem would be lacking in symmetry and proportion. Most good poetry is written with due consideration of these requisites; but where they are not observed, the effect upon the ear and mind of the reader is much like the effect produced by stammering speech or illogical thought.

Some of the poets of to-day have felt that there should be a distinct relationship between thought and rhythm, and where this theory has been carefully observed by the poet, we have come to speak of the quality as *organic rhythm*. In a poem which employs organic rhythm we find that the swing or flow of the lines is often varied to suit the sense, and that in spite of this, the poet has been skillful enough to keep the symmetry of the poem-design as a whole. If you study G. K. Chesterton's "Lepanto," you will find the organic rhythm so well handled that you are conscious of even the changes in speed made by the horses on the journey to the crusade, and that it is not necessary for the poet to tell you whether they galloped or trotted. A very good example may also be found in Vachel Lindsay's "The Santa Fé Trail." Of course there are many poems where the type of rhythm does not essentially matter, but frequently this direct relation maintained between rhythm and idea gives a very effective result.

Organic rhythm

Another interesting experimental form, although it is one which has not been very widely used, is *polyphonic prose*. In a sense it is a form which is half-way between prose and poetry. The rhythm is irregular but there are riming or partly riming words used at intervals. These intervals are not regular and often two words that rime are several lines apart. Sometimes one hardly notices that they rime at all, and yet, to the reader who has a sensitive ear, there is a consciousness of these rimes and echoes of rimes that is very pleasing. The word, *polyphonic*, means *many-sounding*, and a well-written piece

Polyphonic prose

of polyphonic prose is, indeed, many-sounding. John Gould Fletcher's "Clipper Ships" is a beautiful example of this type of work.

Still another experimental form is *imagism.* A group of poets of which Amy Lowell, H. D. (Mrs. Richard Aldington), Richard Aldington, and John Gould Fletcher are perhaps the most prominent, have worked quite extensively in this field and have been called the *Imagists.* Imagism is really more of a theory than anything else. It is the belief of this group who have directed their attentions to this angle of verse-writing that a poet should strive to create new rhythms, and that these rhythms should be the outlet for new moods. They believe that free verse provides the most suitable channel for the expression of individual ideas, and they also believe that in poetry a new cadence, or undulation of sound, is productive of a new idea. It is also their theory that common speech is the most effective kind for poetic expression, and that the *exact* word should express the meaning or shade of meaning desired, and no other should be used. It is their wish at all times to present exact, clear-cut images, devoid of vagueness, and to reproduce their thoughts and emotions with great emphasis on concentration. Undoubtedly there is little that is new in this, and much that has always been accepted and complied with by good poets. However, moved by the dislike of poetry that is flowery and banal, they have sometimes seemed to produce verse stripped of the suggestive details which lend color and life to the thought-content of a great deal of good poetry.

Imagism

"*Vers libre,*" or *free verse,* has received almost unlimited

discussion, and probably thousands of experiments have been made in this form which could hardly be called poetry at all. It is an attempt in a general way to give the poet absolute freedom of expression, *Vers libre* although a certain cadence, or modulation of sound, is observed. It allows great flexibility as far as rhythm is concerned, but it may be too extreme for general success. Only occasionally has the poet been able to use it with perfectly satisfactory results. In the last few years dozens of people who were not poets at all wrote bits of prose in lines of varying length and dubbed it free verse. They seemed to have no notion, in many instances, that the most essential requisites of all in the making of poetry were beauty of idea and expression, and depth of emotional force. For a time some of the editors published this imitation free verse, and the readers of poetry tried to understand it; however, as is always the case when poor craftsmanship obtains, its vogue was of brief duration, and much that saw the light of publication died a speedy death. If you wish to read a piece of free verse of real worth, a poem which has real grandeur and exaltation, and which was inspired by genuine poetic emotion, you might read "The Most Sacred Mountain" by Eunice Tietjens.

We now come to the study of *poetic diction*, and this is one of the most important matters of all. Many students do not realize that words not only have meanings, but that the individual word has what we call shades of *Poetic diction* meaning. Also, words skillfully used have a suggestive power in that they bring to the mind more than one definite idea; indeed, they call up whole trends of

thought through what are called their powers of association. These associated ideas in turn create in our minds many suggested images, or even thoughts, which are secondary in a sense to the principal ones. Perhaps these may be likened, in a way, to the overtones in music, and the lines of a skillful poet are rich in these "poetic overtones." In order to present this suggestive force the poet must be master of his language, or diction, just as the great pianist must be master of his keys and of his method of interpretation. Now the poets of to-day have been intensely interested in this matter of poetic diction. They realized, like all artists, that if they did nothing but echo the work and methods of their predecessors, there would be little that was fresh and vital in their offerings. They also realized that for many years there had been in use old expressions that were so stereotyped and worn that they had all but lost their original force or meaning. Words and figures that once held the charm and freshness of genuine novelty had been used over and over again until they were not only extremely monotonous to the ear, but were powerless to convey the effect or image desired, as well. These words and figures have been called "rubber-stamp" expressions and we can readily see why. There is a French term which we use for these flat, outworn phrases — the word *cliché*. A *cliché* is a stereotype-plate and when these expressions are used by a writer, the reader is soon made to feel that the work produced is lacking in originality and is presented by one who is too lazy to create figures of speech which are fresh and inspiring. If you are trying to write poetry avoid such expressions as "rosy dawn," "deep blue sea," "did swoon," "adown," and "doth." There are many of these clichés,

and they stamp the user as an amateur who still has trouble with his meter and his rime. At the same time they make doggerel of his work. A number of our best poets insist that the language of every-day speech is the very best medium or channel for the expression of the thought of to-day, and there seems to be a very good argument for this point of view. This does not mean that the language of the street-corner is always the best; nor does it mean that there is any essential value in diction, the strangeness of which *startles* the reader into an attitude of attention. It means, only, that the speech of contemporary writers of real worth is a fitting medium for the use of the sincere poet, and that through this medium it is possible to present ideas with such force and beauty that they become a lasting contribution to the literature of our time.

If you should desire to make a more exhaustive study of the poet of to-day, the following list of books will be found helpful:

New Voices by Wilkinson (Macmillan)
Modern American and British Poetry by Untermeyer (Harcourt, Brace)
Contemporary Poetry by Wilkinson (Macmillan)
Yesterday and To-day by Untermeyer (Harcourt, Brace)
The Winged Horse by Auslander and Hill (Doubleday)
The Winged Horse Anthology by Auslander and Hill (Doubleday)
Creative Youth by Hughes Mearns (Doubleday)
The Craft of Poetry by Clement Wood (Dutton)
Our Singing Strength by Kreymborg (Coward-McCann)
The New Poetry by Monroe and Henderson (Macmillan)
Poets and Their Art by Monroe (Macmillan)
The Enjoyment of Poetry by Eastman (Scribner)
An Introduction to Poetry by Hubbell and Beatty (Macmillan)

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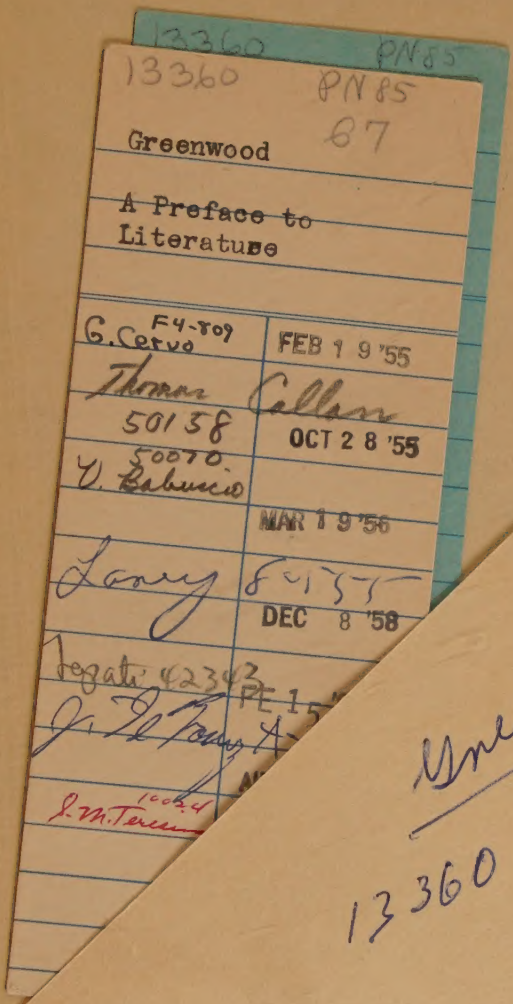
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